

Transcript of Jean-Pierre Sergent lecture's Eros Unlimited | 3 parts | Besançon Fine Arts & Archeology Museum | France 14 February 14th 2020

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PART 1: NON-EUROPEAN OR PRE-MONOTHEISTIC WORKS - [See the video](#) [1/3](#)

- **Nicolas Bousquet:** Good evening ladies and gentlemen! Welcome to this Valentine's Day evening where we will, I hope, learn a lot about art and eroticism thanks to Jean-Pierre Sergent, who has been giving us the pleasure and joy of exhibiting, simultaneously, works at the museum for a few months now: The four pillars of the sky in the museum hall, but as of tonight, you can see this selection of Eros Unlimited silkscreen prints, which is also the name of tonight's conference! So Jean-Pierre Sergent, is going to talk to us about his work, about eroticism in art, from its origins almost up to nowadays, and he will be back for a meeting with Thierry Savatier, art historian and author of a reference book on the Origin of the World, on Sunday 22 March, to give another conference in the same place. So you are obviously welcome to attend and so I will leave the floor to Jean-Pierre and ask you to please turn off your mobile phones so that we don't disturb the conference. Have a great evening!

- **Jean-Pierre Sergent:** Thank you, thank you!
Good evening, good evening everyone. It's really a pleasure to be here in front of you in my town because I've been living in Besançon for a long time. I've been here for 14 years now, after having spent 10 years in New York. I'm going to tell you a little bit about my history and the works of art that I've come across during this journey of my artist's life, over the last forty years or so. It's really a long term job to be an artist and when people think about 20 years of being an artist, I think it takes at least 20 years plus 20 years, you really have to acquire a maturity: apart from artists like Basquiat who was able to meet with his energy very early.

- I-1, Reproduction, Genetic Continuity & Patterns

So, firstly, I wanted to talk about the Asmat totem poles of New Guinea. These are poles that are in the Metropolitan Museum, well these are in New Guinea and it really speaks of the genealogy of the human being. That is to say that they tell us about in those poles... See, that's in the In Garbha #4 Upanishads:
"Thousands of times before
I lived in a mother womb
I took pleasure eating numerous kind of foods

And I have been suckling on so many mother's breasts
I have been born and been dead again And endlessly, I came to be born again"
It is the Hindu thought that tells us this. We think we are unique but they that think we are connected to an universal cosmic spirit. These totems, I told you about them. It is a work that really influenced me during my New York's years because these works show, in fact, the genealogical continuity; in general, you have the grandparents, the parents and then the child who is above, who comes out of a male ejaculation.

The man who ejaculates and his 3 childrens

There are quite a few women, sometimes there are, but often they are patriarchal societies and sometimes it's a rather violent society, because in the end, for us, they were cannibals. But their art is very, very strong and powerful! It was when I saw these works that I understood that I had to do a rather strong work, which I hope to do now. Here, you can see very well, above the man who ejaculates and the children who are born like that. For example, there are three children spurting from his penis. It's really magnificent and it's sculpted in a rather phenomenal, rather meticulous way, and it must be said that these are poles that are 3 to 4 meters high or even higher. These works are in the Metropolitan Museum. When we are in front of this, we are in front of an energy that we could call genético-cosmic. Within these Asmats tribes, as in many people before, they live with the remains of their ancestors. They worship the corpse of the ancestors and they decorate them with feathers, with shells and these are really very, very strong works, which influenced me to work on the subjects of sexuality and death.

Genetic Patterns

I wanted to talk about the patterns that I use a lot in my work, one can explain that they are all genetic patterns as we talked about earlier, with the father, the mother, the son and the daughter etc. That's how it's interwoven. There's a writer who wrote a very interesting book entitled: Patterns that Connect. I'm profoundly inspired by that book, because we think that patterns are only figurative designs, decorative things, but for them it has a deep meaning. It's true that it enters them in this web of connections about we talked about earlier.

You see, for example, I took this picture in a museum and after the next picture, we'll see what I did with it in a work.

- I-2, The fertile & sexed Gods & Goddesses

Now I'm going to talk about fertile and sexed gods and goddesses. Because it must be said that in the West, the god or goddesses are not gendered. That still poses a problem for human thought and behaviours!

The Prehistoric Venus

This is the "Venus of Hôhle Fels", Germany, 35,000 BC. It must be said that in the beginning, these prehistoric, palaeolithic societies needed fertility. They

really didn't know very well how we reproduce somehow, they hadn't connected sexuality and motherhood and all that. But they were still aware that women had to be generous somewhere, abundant in their flesh in order to regenerate mankind and the new generations. So it's a very beautiful fertility statue. Also, this little statue from Iran, it's beautiful really, it remind us of some contemporary artists of today. We see tattoos. Of course, we have lost a lot of works, because a lot of art made at that time were also made on clothes, probably, and everything has been lost. We still have some statues on bone or on stone or in the caves. There is also a beautiful statue which is from France, the Venus de l'Abris Pataud, -20 000 BC. Here is an other Iranian goddess, which is magnificent. I found it on the internet, the breasts are well noted, the pubis also with the slit. This is very important because you have to think that in the West, sex is never draw with the slit for at least 500 years. And of course, the sex of an erect man is never signified neither!

Indian Statues

This is from India:

"In some temples in Nepal, Women are shown naked, presenting their vaginas (yonis) to the faithful in remembrance of samasara, the gateway to the world of life, pleasure, suffering and death."

One must not forget that there is pleasure and suffering and death of course that accompany us throughout our lives... It's a very beautiful statue, you have to see the temples in India, I never had the chance to go there but I always have a feeling of joy in front of these works and also a feeling of non-terror because the West is terrorised and very anxious towards sexuality! Look at these sculptures in temples, you would show this today in a museum, the museum would have to close! it poses a serious serious problem! There are scenes of fellatios, sodomies... They're having a blast. Some temples are decorated on the outside only and are empty inside to represent the matrix, the place where one is created if you like. These statues are all really beautiful! Look at this one! One can think of porn stars bodies today, but it was about 200 AD. Hindus had understood this sensuality because on one hand, they live in tropical countries and de facto, nature and food are more sensual and therefore obviously men and women are more sensual, it's obvious. it's a combination of factors and I really like also Mayan cultures for those reasons too. You all know the *Kamasutra*, we can see that the erotic act is well notified in details. The woman takes her pleasure and the man too.

The Kamasutra

It must be said that these little miniatures were probably for the court of certain princes and they were images that were at that time quite refined... Because in France, erotic drawings were really, I will show you some later, tragic somewhere, tragic-comical.

Here is another statue with, next to it, the linga which is the phallic symbol in India. These are stone lingams that are perhaps one or two metres high. Both

male and female sides are honoured in these societies and I find it very interesting.

This is a vulva traced of on the ground; often it is the women who trace these works into clay or sand soils. It's simply beautiful. So, this is a yoni traced in the ground, a vulva symbolising the strength of Shakti's female creation.

Here you have the diagram of the linga and the yoni, so here are the gods who are also integrated in this sexual creation diagram, there is Vishnu and Brahma the creator... I think it is fabulous, really and magnificent! Another erotic picture, see this is a royal man and woman making love, it's a classical Indian gouache.

I would like to insist a little bit to this, we see the goddess Kali who beheads herself during coitus to regenerate the world.

Kali, the representation of Shakti, the mother goddess... In other words, all these traditional societies have a notion of sacrifice, meaning that life does not just happen by chance. Somewhere out there, there are other people sacrificing themselves or nature sacrificing itself so that we can live.

The Dance Of Chimeras

"The lake shines, we hear his voice, he chews his mate,
the hunters spoke, before starting the dance,
but since the gods want to feed
of their creatures and would not exist...
if their living creatures didn't feed them,
to exist is to feed the gods,
painting requires eye food
and wouldn't exist if the eyes didn't feed it,
it's only by seeing that you can feed the paint,
and seeing is not just seeing with the pupils of the god-eyes but seeing with
the eyes of all who see."

Miguel Angel Asturias, Indian messages

So we see Kali copulating and her second self, her soul or etheric body is auto-decapitated, her blood spurts from her neck and her maidens collect it in sacrificial bowls. Symbolically, these are works that are very strong. And I think that psychoanalysts can look at this for years without understanding anything. It's something amazing, it's this cosmic energy that we can talk about here. There are also some water lilies below, water lilies, symbol of wisdom, completion and awakening of the Buddha. I would like to talk about a film that I particularly like, it's *The Road to India* (by David Lean), where an English woman arrives to India and she sees all these sensual Indian statues and it boosts her libido, truth is that she didn't had (or no longer had) a libido or sexual desires as many Europeans... The sensuality of the Indian statues awoke deeply her libido and her sexuality. And she invented a story that the Indian guide (a really sweet guy), who was a doctor, had raped her in the Marabar caves. It's a very, very beautiful movie that I highly recommend you to watch when you have the time.

Here we see the metacosmic void, that is to say that for the Hindus, everything is created, we can explain it as a cosmic big bang. Here there is no bindu point

in general there is the bindu point in the middle. The female triangles are pointing down and male triangles are pointing up. It is always this sexual entanglement, and it is the beginning of the world in the original ocean with the intricate mixing of the female and male triangles that I just spoke about. It's like a matrix where the world is created and the human being is created. It's at the exact opposite of the biblical creation! This is a work I did in relation to this yantra, I just added the bindu point in the middle. This is a Mexican painting on a vase. It is not so much erotic and it's so erotic paradoxically... They are Mayan warriors or nobles men and when you see their costumes, they have integrated all the nature around them inside of it. One can see snakes, you see feathers. The characters incarnate an entire world in themselves, a cosmogony in themselves. They belong to the world (also the celestials and infra worlds) they embody these worlds here. I think when one had a chance to be in front of a figure like that it must have been pretty damn impressive! It's not the ridiculous king Louis XIV! It's something else! It's a cosmical and spiritual dimension really...

The Mexican goddess Coatlicue

I happened to travel a few times to Mexico with my friend Olga, where I had the chance to discover the Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City and so there it is the goddess Coatlicue, the goddess of fertility and the Earth in Aztec mythology. And so, that's not the Virgin Mary, not at all, you see it: it's a bit of a kick, it's giving off! Because she wears a collar of snakes, around her, she carries a belt of skulls of the dead people and hearts: she is really a sacrificial, regenerative statue. I am going to read this text:

"She is represented as a woman wearing a skirt of twisted snakes, a necklace of human hearts, hands, skulls. Her feet and hands are adorned with claws (for digging graves) and her breasts hang down, flaccid from having suckled a lot. If Coatlicue wears the hands, hearts and heads of her children on her chest, it is to purify them."

This is truly a mother goddess par excellence with an incredible telluric strength. Because Mayas and Aztecs are of course polytheists and for them it is their mother, the goddess Coatlicue. So I wanted to read this sentence to you because it makes my heart ache...

"Someone told me later that some natives sneaked in at night to lay wreaths of flowers on this statue. Proof that, despite the greatest care of the Spanish clergy (the poor bastards!), during 300 years, there was still a remnant of pagan belief among the descendants of the natives."

And that's terrible what the Catholic Church did to those people, all the Indians who were massacred... It's an incredible genocide (an ethnocide even!). Well, of course the churches have calmed down a bit today, but there are other iconoclastic monotheists who destroy a lot of things, but it's important to know that all these peoples have been dispossessed of their cultures, that's it!

A book important to read: Bartolome de la Casas: *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*.

"Coyolxauhqui is the daughter of Coatlicue, the one with bells painted on her

face. And the Moon Goddess, among the Aztecs she's the daughter of Coatlicue, who is said to have set the stars against her mother when she found out she was pregnant."

One can see jealousy in mythologies as everywhere else! It's a sad feeling, jealousy, well, it exists too... And it's also a magnificent work! Very, very beautiful...

Eros & Egypt

This is an Egyptian statue that is in the Louvre, very small and I also did a silkscreen after taking this photo. See how the dress looks so contemporary, it's an amazing design. I'm talking here about sensuality, I'm not talking about sexuality but still it's... it makes you want to fall in love this woman. Here, the image is not great, it's Geb and Nout, the creation of the world. And yet, one can see the god... who is horny, somehow! And the goddess Nut who receives him, the goddess Nut is the goddess of Heaven and the stars and Geb is the Earth god. So there is this meeting between heaven and earth, united by the penis... It's very very beautiful, it's a magnificent image. Here we see an ityphallic god Katoumef. Well, we never see the Christian god... ityphallic, it doesn't exist in our religions, it's really sad!

The Beauty Of The Egyptian Eternity

This is a picture I took at the Metropolitan Museum; it's the face of an Egyptian woman on an Egyptian sarcophagus and I've really always been in love somehow with this mummy, it's really a face that moves me profoundly. It is a mummy that is more than three or four thousand years old, we don't know! But this face is so sensual and serene that it has always moved me profoundly. This is also a tiny statue that is in the Louvre, and the 13 vital points have been pierced by copper needles, to ask for the absolute and eternal love of a lover! Well it's Valentine's Day, so you can try do that today, except that it has to be buried in the grave of someone who died from a violent death, so I don't know if you know any criminals tonight, but here it is! They weren't kidding about love affairs in Egypt at that time! And this tiny statue was wrapped up by a sheet of lead foil, where all the magic formulas were written to grant each other eternal love of the beloved: I love this statue.

Greece & Rome

Here we see Greece or Rome, where the bodies start to desexualise a little, sex is still represented but idealised and we can't see the hair or the cleft, but it's like that and it's beautiful despite everything. This is a picture I took also at the Louvre, which is also beautiful, this statue is very sensual indeed; I did a silkscreen work with this image. The marble is superb, really it's incredibly sensitive too. Here are some Greek erotic works: you can see the erotic game, one can feel that they don't have this western anguish towards sexuality yet, the body was still well honored fully in Greece. For those of you who speak English I would advise you to read this book *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess/ The Conflict Between Word and Image* by Leonard Shlain which was very

important for me: I had listen to this author at the Open Center in New York and he had gone to Greece and he had seen these nudes like that, whose sex was not hidden (by the so famous vine leaf!) and who were completely free of their sexualities and their lives. And he thought to himself: What went so wrong in the West that made the body so repressed in literature and mostly in artistic representation? And he thinks, because he is a neurosurgeon; he thinks that it is because of the opposition between the brain hemispheres left and right, the left brain being that of the text (the right that of the image) and he thought that every time the text took advantage over the right brain (intuitive), women were repressed (or even burned alive!) like during the time of invention of the Gutenberg Bible printing, Then, they have been chasing a lot of witches women, so it's really a problem and it's a book that's illustrated and it's really very, very interesting to read.

Moche Erotic Potteries

There, I wanted to evoke the Moche culture (pre-Incaic), this people had a culture of erotic works: they made beautiful and complex ceramics and on these vases they often sculpted scenes of either fellatio or sodomy... it is a culture rather unknown, but I had the chance to see a beautiful exhibition of these works there in the Ethnological Museum of Vienna and their works really fascinate me, so at the same time they served alcohol from those vases, we don't know for which ritual it was made? But these are really beautiful works. So here we see an other erotic scene as well.

Here is an ithyphallic man. It's funny because you can feel the joy of being alive and horny!

This is an Amerindian statue at the MET, I've always liked this sculpture, one can feel that it's an Amerindian woman, who has her feet grounded to earth, who has given birth, who is happy within her body and sexuality, in her life, well that's what I assume, but it's a beautiful presence.

And I wanted to end this little chapter by saying that in Madagascar, many statues on the tombs present scenes of copulation, here we see a woman who is very gendered woman in order to generate life, it changes from our painful crucified Christ. These are also funerary statues Sakalava from Madagascar.

- I-3, Poetry, pleasure, desire and the Japanese shungas

Of course, I couldn't give a lecture on eroticism without talking about the Japanese erotic shungas that everyone knows already!

"These early *Ukiyo-e* prints were designed to illustrate explicit textbooks on sexuality, sex was considered in Japan at the time, as a natural function and a way to have fun. So these images, which would be censored today, were not particularly shocking."

So that was sex education at the time and fortunately great artists illustrated those beautiful scenes and of course they're absolutely beautiful works. Here, the vulva shungas and the colors are also superb, you see it's just a red that is a little bit faded to pink, there are just two colors in there, they are wood

engravings (xylography) I think. And then you see this magnificent work in four parts, you see a print of sodomy and it's really... The way the scenes are cut out, it's almost cinematographic so congratulations to the artist named Torii Kiyonaga, 1785. And well, in France, we had some people making engravings that were a bit obscene but it wasn't that artistic neither poetical to that level. Here's another shunga. So in these shungas everything is described practically, all the erotic scenes can be described (even bestiality). So here it is, we see a view with a huge sex! The Japanese increase the size of the sexes... It's their choice! As for us, we do have the Eiffel Tower! Another erotic engraving. There was a golden age of the shungas (18th-19th) and of course today, these shungas have given the manga that everyone knows. The erotic manga (hentai) at the beginning, it was really great artists at last, who became very famous artists who started this. And so, I wanted to come to the West, here is the image of a vulva in the West, it's really the opposite of what we've seen! One can feel all the morality, you can almost feel displeasure, you can feel a doctrine and so it's not something that makes you want to have sex! It's really rationality in all its splendour. It must be said that it is interesting, though, but the West has lost this joy, this poetry of creating, procreating and perhaps sexuality too.

Guatemala | Cantata

"Home of perfect lights, you were
the melodious, agrarian, ingenuous party,
but today arms in crosses cover your fields! [...]
A homeland whose perfect pleasures were born...
also sound, colour, taste and smell.
that now our senses grow back horrified!"
Miguel Angel Asturias, Indian Messages

PART 2: ADAM & EVE, THE SIN, THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD & SOME WORKS OF WESTERN ART - [See the video 2/3](#)

- II-1, Adam & Eve, Human Exile & Mythologies

Here, I wanted to speak of course of original sin and also of human exile because we know that almost all human cultures are exiled. One know that the cradle of humanity is in Africa? So now I'm going to talk about some mythological and western works. Is that so? So we all feel exiled from our matrix Africa. So here I'm going to talk about some Western mythological works. Here is the West, the image is quite simple, you have Eve who still has breasts, but of course the sex are hidden, the sex of man (Adam) is masked, there is the serpent, the tree of Eden but it is still restrictive in relation to the greatness and the universality of consciousness; it is poor, although this work is very beautiful, but humanly it is poor. The tree of good and evil is morality. And there, Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise, it's quite violent, when you think about it, that is to say that we would almost have to go and kill our parents because they procreated us and they drove us de facto out of Paradise; it still creates generations of crazy people, excuse me for saying so,

but it's a fundamental problem. Here again, God, the unic Creator, in all monotheists religion, it is always God who creates, it is not the Gods, it is not the flowers, it is neither trees, he creates the world in seven days. And the poor Adam and Eve are driven out of Paradise because they gave birth so it is a total paradox with life somehow! We can talk about anti-life without being any very wrong!

Here then, it is the beautiful Adam and Eve of Albrecht Durer who is at the Prado in Madrid. And so we see that sex are not featured, it is hidden by leaves of vines or apple trees, but despite everything, I will come back to this with the following illustration, we see that the woman touches the sex of the man, everything becomes a symbol and the symbol is not the true thing. As I mentioned earlier about the goddess Coatlicue... When the Aztecs or the Mayans incarnated a God, they were wearing reals snakes on them. When they want to regenerate the world they kill a victim, they flaying it and they coat the victim's skin on them! It's powerful! It's not some mushy stuff like that, it's real life! Life is very violent somewhere, so there we are in a childish ideology, even if it's very beautiful... But we are still in an ideology completely out of life (out of body!) once again.

You see, the detail there, from Eve's hand and we can say that it's erotic, the sex is hidden, it's maybe more erotic, but still it's hidden anyway. So how can we imagine our body as a whole. That's it, it's a contemporary pornographic image, that's what happens in real life, well, not for everyone.

And here, we are talking about two works of this museum, this one, The Death of Lucretia, by Lucas Cranach said the elder, is a very, very erotic work because although there is a small veil, the sex is still indicated and the nipples are erect somehow and she pierces her breast with this dagger which is eminently a phallic symbol. It's a very, very beautiful painting and then you have to go back to 1520, so it's been over 500 years that eroticism has been banished from paintings. This one is alike, you can feel that it's a woman masturbating. With the spring running through there... There are also other sexual symbols, but the fountain springing and her hand towards the sex: it's a woman who gives herself pleasure; for me, after each one to its interpretation, I don't want to impose mine to anyone.

Contemporary pornography has nevertheless (there is good and evil!), but it has nevertheless put the body back in its entirety and made us reintegrate our body in desire.

Now I'm coming to Leda and the Swan because I'm going to talk about it a little later. In mythologies, there is always an animal or a tree that creates, that is to say that we (human being) were much more in connection with nature, this relationship that we have lost today, we have definitely lost it. But I want to come back to this painting to talk about Leda of the Swan. This is a painting by Peter-Paul Rubens. Of course, artists had "normal" sexual lives, so they had to create works in which sexuality were not allowed at all, it's really problematic. This problem was more or less solved with the arrival of the 20th century and I'll talk about it later! But of course the swan represents the male sex. That was tolerated in museums and you can see that the woman sucks the swan's beak,

well it's very, very erotic and artists were forced to use some ersatz like this one (metaphors). So here, I wanted to talk about swans precisely, because I'm a canoeist and it's to show that these mythologies are totally arbitrary and childish, because swans are not very cooperative and kind animals. Once I went canoeing, I put my canoe to the river and this swan flew a metre high and it ran into me, I took my paddle and boom! I didn't kill it, because my sister was there and she took that picture! But that's a load of crap! Beware of swans! One can easily realise that this painting (Leda and the Swan) is a mythological nonsense and purely fictional! It's dangerous to even approach a swan, but to make love with a swan, I wouldn't recommend it! We see here the Birth of Venus, by Botticelli, it's a very sensual painting too, it's magnificent! But it is always also the breath of life that arrives by the breath and does never not arrive by the sex, it is like that. We have to accept our weaknesses somewhere too.

This is an erotic statue that I found on the Internet but I have no idea where it is from and I think it's fabulous to put it in a church on a tomb, so that's very strong. It's very beautiful! You see there are three penises and the woman is open like this, it's really a very erotic work. I think it may date back to the High Middle Ages or sometime like that. I couldn't find any more information about this statue.

- II-2, Ulysses & the Mermaids & Some Erotic Works of Western Art

- The terror of women sexual ecstasies

I am going to talk about this exit from Paradise and of Ulysses, because of course, it is a bit like the journey of Ulysses who left his wife at home and then comes back after ten years of absence and his poor Penelope who weaves his tapestry while waiting for him. As I said before, we are all a little bit exiled and I wanted to tell you about the Sirens of Ulysses and of the fear, the terror in front of the sexual enjoyment of women.

Here we see a Middle Ages statue, with grotesque features showing an exaggeration of the vital organs, it's in England and so at a certain time the church, well let's say 10th or 11th century, people still showed sex but maybe to scare people too? That's pretty scary somewhere. I'll talk later about an American artist who used up this statue in her work. Also a statue where the sex is well marked there, it's good, with the breasts, in a Roman church. This is what we see from the 15th century onwards: the Virgin Mary only breastfeeds (no more sex), that is to say that she was asexual, well I'm not going to criticise, we all know the story too well... And men are always asexual or childish. There are no more powerful & ithyphallic men as one could say. It's procreation soilless (Ex nihilo) somewhere, one could almost say that. There, despite everything, this image is quite erotic because it's a bit contemporary as its clothes are a bit like sadomasochistic clothes. I found this image beautiful: Madonna surrounded by seraphim and cherubim" (1420, Jean Fouquet). It's the same, the infant is a little bit impasted, klutzy, but it's still interesting anyway.

So I come back to Ulysses and the sirens, Ulysses had to be tied to his trireme so as not to succumb to the cries of women, the cries of women are the shouting of feminine pleasure. Even he had other adventures during his journey but despite everything he had to be chained to resist to his own desire. Somewhere living in society is a bit like that, that is to say, restricting our desires to live together. so that we can live together. Of course, we can't be crazy like Sade, I'll talk about that later. And it's an interesting picture. And it's an interesting image, this story of being in-chained, of asking to be chained so as not to have access to our vital energy, we have to think about it! Here is another mermaid and a centaur.

So in order to talk about sexuality, we have to mix off our body part unsexed with an animal sexed body. It's quite problematic! Here is Ulysses and the mermaids again, it's a beautiful Roman mosaic. We thought that antiquity was a period of great sexual freedom but maybe not so much. We should think about it anyway.

- II-3, "The Origin of the World", the return home, the end of exile!

I wanted to mention Gustave Courbet's L'origine du monde and I wanted to start my lecture with that painting, but I wanted to introduce you to a few other works beforehand. Everybody in the West knows it as one and only paintings representing one sex woman sex in the history of art, and before talking about it I wanted to quote Anselm Kiefer, who is a contemporary German artist:

"Ethics don't exist in art because ethics and morality are always linked to time, morality always changes, so an artist cannot have a moral because otherwise he is frozen in time." One need to understand that, we artists are necessarily outside or elsewhere, otherwise we do exactly what society ask us to do, Anselm Kiefer and German artists more than French ones, were able to gain power in their works of art because they were paying somehow for the debt of Germany that had exterminated so many people and were hold responsible for the two world wars. I will told you later about why the body and life return into art and painting. But there are of course people who feel guilty somewhere, or victims and then you have to pay the full price, one don't create wars without having to pay the aesthetic and also emotional price.

Here is this famous painting! We will talk about it in more deeply when my friend Thierry Savatier comes to talk about it because he wrote 2 - 3 books about this painting only. Beyond the anecdotes we can see that the sex, the hair and the lips of the pubis are well shown. It is a very beautiful painting which fortunately, was not destroyed. As it could have been destroyed of course... Now it's in Orsay and I had the chance to see it several times, in New York, it also came few times to Ornans as well. For westerners (French in particular), it's the only painting they know about a female sex, it's very distressing somehow!

Finally, it's the most famous. Here's another image that looks exactly like it, it's a contemporary pornographic image. The sex is more obvious because it's a picture!

So I wanted to talk about Gauguin who was so bored in Europe that he found

sad and grey, that he went to Tahiti. He even helped to dig the Panama Canal and he had invented this "Maison du jour" in 1901, just at the beginning of the 20th century. "Be mysterious, be in love, be happy." It's a bit of an injunction, but it's the deep and untouched pleasure he found in the Marquesas Islands. Today we'd like to get the Gauguins out of the museums and we're coming to a hell of a problem. I have great respect for his work and his courage. See this canvas which is magnificent, see the ochres, the reds, the cobalt blues, it reminds us a little bit of the lost paradise... And that's what he was looking for... and that's what we're all seeking for.

Here's a Rodin's statue which again shows an image of an open woman sex. Rodin also had a lot of courage because it's the body that obsessed him, because sculptors are more "obsessed" with the whole body than painters because they can't cheat. Obviously when one represent a naked body, it is necessarily sexed! Here is this beautiful Cambodian dancer, 1906, it's really magnificent, this sensuality... And many of her artists had gone to Cambodia, to Morocco to find back a sensuality that was disappearing in Europe with industrialisation, poverty, chain work and despair. It's true that peasant and traditional societies suffered much less from the dichotomy and conflicts between nature, work, religions and societies. Another drawing by Rodin.

Here I move on to Egon Schiele, because everybody knows his erotic works, you can feel that he is deeply tormented, yet it is a work of 1913, just before the First World War, and I think that Austrian society must have been very anxious, for artists to create such desperate art works. Of course there were perhaps epidemics that changed the face of the world and after the war, we will see other drawings by Schiele where the body was so badly treated that it shows in his works. This is an erotic work, it's a bit of a brothel eroticism. One can feel it's an eroticism of despair, an eroticism that you cling to when you don't believe in anything anymore. I don't know the story of its life so well, but I think he suffered a lot, those are artists who had suffered a lot, like Antonin Artaud of whom I will talk about later on. These works are terrible somewhere! Here is another painting by Schiele from 1915.

Here we go to Klimt, one feel that his work is more decorative and Zen, he is less anxious than Schiele and it is a bit like the "baba-cool" of the time and it is very beautiful, magnificent, he stated: "All art is erotic." And we can't say anything truer than that! I will say that even if you paint flowers or, like Giorgio Morandi, ceramics, plates, pottery, the sensuality has to remain. And here, I wanted to evoke the Demoiselles d'Avignon and pay homage to Picasso, this painting, that I know very well since it is at MOMA in New York where I had often the opportunity to go and see it. One can really see, in this painting, what we can call the primary vital energy. We know that these women (who are in a brothel) are sex workers and are there to seduce and to get fucked. It's Eros incarnated; with those "Picasso eyes", like that. We don't know if they're looking at us or if it's us, it as an impressive mirror effect. It's a painting that I like very much, and I won't talk about Picasso to long, but we have to pay tribute to him because like Gauguin, he reintegrated other cultures (African and Negro art as it was called at the time) to reintegrate this energy that had

completely disappeared from the easel painting of the time. And so he was able to open up this 20th century to other experiences and forms of bodies, of desires and we can see that the painting is completely filled: the whole surface is full, it's obviously an energy painting!

In relation to it, one can see a scene from the Middle Ages where bodies bathe in joy while touching each other, in the 15th century and earlier, manners were more innocent regarding sex issues. Here I want to pay homage to Amedeo Modigliani, because it's a painting that's at the Guggenheim and that I'm going to see often. He also painted nudes like that, we don't really know who she is, but we feel the sensuality of this sleeping woman. I'll take this opportunity to talk a bit about artists life because, Modigliani lived in total misery and Chagall's son was talking about it on the radio the other day. His father had told to him: "*Above all do never become an artist, I knew Modigliani and he ate the seeds that people gave to the birds!*" And now this painting is worth maybe 30 to 50 million dollars. So there's a huge gap between the creation and the apogee of artists' works prices and I think France is a country that doesn't take pride in helping artists, even today. Because all the artists who were starving at the time were often saved and supported by foreign American and German collectors. Just wanted to mention it! That's a crude story, it's a parenthesis and let's close it! Here, I wanted to talk about Douanier Rousseau, in these works, there is an innocence and cruelty linked to this lost paradise where one can live freely. The desire is embodied by the two lions and there is this luxuriance found also in the Mayan vases, which I like very much. It is a bit the picture of innocence.

- III, THE RETURN OF THE SEXED BODY - [See the video 3/3](#)

- III-1, Contemporary & American female artists

So here, I wanted to talk about the return of the sexualised body with Frida Kahlo who is one of my favorite artists, well we all know the story of Frida Kahlo, but in a few words she is a Mexican artist who had a serious car accident when she was a teenager and who suffered during all her life of excruciating pain! We see her in this painting with her broken column and she is important because she is a woman artist, I will come back later on the female art that we know very little about and her paintings have a rather particular strength. Here we see Frida Kahlo, she had a miscarriage at the Henry Ford Hospital and she really describes what a miscarriage is! It's not dumb as they say, it's really serious. She talks about her pelvis, her bones, her kid who died and her body bleeding. All her paintings have that power, evocative of what real life is like when you go to hospitals, when you're in pain... And in joy too! Here she is, I thought this photo was magnificent, it was taken naked, well, she was a bit of a pop star at the time! She played a bit the game of the woman artist and she was right because we know her today thanks to her courage and tenacity. There she wrote a letter to her photographer friend, she had several lovers of course, Nickolas Muray and I'm going to read you this letter because it makes us think about the situation in

Europe and France in particular. So she talks about some surrealists painters, because some French artists had invited her to participate to an exhibition in 1939 where she could only show a few paintings, because unfortunately, most of her paintings were removed from the exhibition. So I will read her letter: "They have so many rotten fucking intellectuals that I can't stand them anymore. They are really too much for me. I'd rather sit on the floor in the Toluca market (Mexico City market) selling tortillas than have anything to do with those artistic assholes from Paris... (That's strong!) I've never seen Diego or you wasting your time in those stupid chats and intellectual discussions. That's why you're real men and not pathetic artists (That is very funny and truth!) - Damn! It was worth coming all the way here just to understand why Europe is rotting, why all those incapable people are the cause of all Hitlers and Mussolini."

These are her own words, but it's true that when she comes here and even I, after the wars, coming back from New York, one can feel this loss of energy. There's something that's disappeared somewhere but is still there in Mexico or Guatemala. Or in countries that have remained more traditional. It has to be said that a third of their population is still indigenous, so it's very important! For example: we, our druids we no longer have them! We've kicked everyone out, including the witches! And the shamans in Russia, the government threw them out of the helicopters because of course the shamans can fly (in their trance). So, they captured them and threw them out of the helicopters to kill them.

- III-2, The Return of the Sexed Body, Contemporary Artists & American Women Artists.

Here we see Louise Bourgeois, who is a very important artist, American but French born, who had worked a lot with sexuality, and I'm going to talk especially in this chapter about American artists whose work I know particularly well. Because they've done some fabulous work on sexuality, which may also have been done in France but I know less about it! So, Louise Bourgeois made this big penis because she had problems with her family, with her father... This is a picture of Robert Mapplethorpe which is beautiful from 1982 and you can see the joy of this woman. It's a bit like in Greece, where there were the Phallophories where women wore big penises like this, it's good and funny!

"In the classical Greek world, the Phallophories, were solemn processions in honour of Dionysus, in which an enormous wooden phallus was carried, accompanying the procession, with typical songs, like the one of the poet of Delos put in one of his theatrical works: Withdraw, make way for the god, because he wants to resist, to swell, to advance in the middle."

This is a very sexual injunction!

Here we are in Japan, I still dare you to do that in Besançon! But you can always try! I'll talk later about Japan where they've kept their rituals. Here it's a drawing by Louise Bourgeois in cooperation with Tracey Emin, Louise Bourgeois did the drawing and her friend embroidered a little erotic woman on

the penis. It's called: "Do Not Abandon Me" (a million ways to come somewhere). And when female artists appropriate sexuality, it becomes more real and true than when men talk about it.

Here I want to talk about the artist Kiki Smith, who is also a very important American artist. It must be said that all her artists were feminists, in New York, there is a gallery dedicated to their work (A.I.R.Gallery), in which only female artists are shown. And I recently heard that the museum in Baltimore, has decided to buy only works by women artists for this year 2020. That made some people laugh on my Facebook page but still, there's a real problem in art, because there's in museums, in this museum, I don't really know how many works are made by women, but probably less than 1%, I don't know? We should discuss this with the director. But it's very non-existent. When you go to the Louvre, it's the same thing. So you have to think that art is made by men, mainly European art is made mainly by men, and that raises a question somewhere. Half of humanity is not in museums, and this idea of creating a museum where only women's works are bought. I, as an American, think it's a good thing because there is a problem and they are facing it, Americans are pragmatic people and that's a good thing.

Here is an other work by Kiki Smith, it must be said that these artists started working in the 1960s, but here it is in 1992 and it must also be said that it was the arrival of AIDS in New York, which was one of the cities most affected and all these artists, either they are like Keith Haring, who died of AIDS, or it has profoundly marked this generation, just as the world wars have deeply marked previous generations. But AIDS has been in the art world specifically and it's really made a difference. That's why we can see such a work. It doesn't come out of nowhere and they're important works! These artists talk about their bodies. It's a bit like Greek mythology with the goat and his body like that... "Tied to her Nature", it's a work in connection with her deep self somewhere (her animality).

And here, I wanted to talk to you about Nancy Spero whom work I like very much, she systematically takes works issues from ancients traditions like this woman. It's a Greek drawing, painted on a Greek pottery, this woman with her two dildos masturbating like this, she liked this image, so she redrew it. It can be paradoxical: it can be a criticism of the way we see the woman's body; or it can also be the liberation of the woman desire! It's the artist who has to know this, but we have to ask ourselves the question. I'm going to talk about her Codex Artaud series, because Artaud had made some very, very violent drawings when he was in a psychiatric hospital and she completed a whole series on this codex. We can see that it is inhabited by madness somewhere, by the desire to get out of the societal straitjacket, of morality, to exist and for the body to exist in its wholeness.

That's it, that's also women that she's got back, it's beautiful, it's probably Cambodian or African women, it's women who dance like that... And here: Sperm Bomb, I think it speaks to you, it was the Vietnam War too! So all these female artists, or male artists too, wanted to talk about the war, this cruelty and stupidity that are wars. And all the time, wars are declared and fought by

men, we know that very well, so it's kind of her way of saying: "Well men, fuck you, you fuck us with your atomic ejaculations, we're fed up with it!" There's Nancy Spero, in front of the statue I showed you earlier that she had redrawn, she made things with these statues. It's really to show that her body, her sexual body exists. You can't exist without your sex. And here she talks about it in an interview:

"I think the anger in the War Series and Artaud's paintings came from the feeling that I had no voice (*of course women artists in the 60s and 70s were not exhibited in galleries!*), an arena for dialogue, that I had no identity. I felt like a non-artist, a non-person. I was furious, furious that my voice as an artist was not recognised."

It's really important for an artist to be exposed and recognised!

"That's Artaud works. That's exactly why I chose to use Artaud's writings, because he shouts, screams, raves and raves about having his tongue cut out, about being castrated. He has no voice, he is silenced in a bourgeois society."

And that's exactly what is happening today: society is becoming more and more bourgeois! There are artists who find their place, but the only artists who find their place are those who sell for more than a hundred thousand euros, and who all and always do some politically correct works, that is to say work that should not disturb anyone. Because if you are like Damien Hirst, who exhibits in London, Hong Kong, Shanghai or whatever: your work must be understood and buyable everywhere! So obviously you won't go to Arabic countries to show sex scenes and all that... Because it won't sell!

I advise you, if you have Twitter, to follow this account called WOMENSART where there are always really fabulous things, where they show us works of female artists that are really always amazing!

Here's a drawing by Artaud, look at this delirium he was in. It's both terrible, what year is it from? 19 46! It's also about war, despair, loneliness, enchainment and suffering.

I come to Basquiat of course, because he also liberated painting by creating his art works in the street. And I like his work which has a lot of energy and freedom! I'm going to finish with Piss Christ, I don't want to shock anyone, but Andres Serrano is a New York artist of Puerto Rican origin, who arrived in the years of AIDS in New York, so inevitably, he saw many of his friends die and being of Puerto Rican origin, which are very religious people; when you are a believer and you see epidemics like this coming, you ask yourself the question, of course, but where is God? And AIDS being transmitted through bodily fluids so he worked with piss, milk, blood, semen... This work was exhibited in Avignon and have been vandalised. We think what we want, but I wanted to talk about this work. Because during this conference, I did not show any Christ on the cross because it is not my subject but I wanted to end there. Here we see Jeff Koons and the Cicciolina, he made himself known, at the beginning of his career, by making love with the Cicciolina. So it's interesting, because it was sex that made him famous, but today, he doesn't talk about sex anymore to be 100% politically correct. And he says it coldly, crudely, cynically:
"*Anyway, I make Puppies, because it sells much better and more expensive*

than my erotic works."

"The painters didn't paint what they should have painted but only what they were commissioned to paint, or what brought them money or fame. The painters, all those old masters, who most of the time disgust me more than anything else and who have always given me the shivers, have never served one master, never themselves and thus mankind itself. All the same, they always painted a fake world that they drew from themselves, from which they hoped to obtain money and glory; all of them painted only for that purpose, out of envy of money and envy of glory, not because they wanted to be painters but only because they wanted to have glory or money or glory along with money." Thomas Bernhard, *Old Masters*

Well, his work is really kitsch and it's dated from the 80s, 90s, but there are still artists who dared to stage their sexuality like that. It's interesting, you can get knocked out in front of works like that, it's courageous! And so he stated in an interesting sentence, even if I don't like to quote him too much:

"I think sexuality is important for my work because it's important for the survival of the species and Art tries to communicate what's most important. This dialogue of acceptance of sexuality is transferred to the realm of aesthetics and all other spheres of life."

I am going to talk briefly about Outsider Art, because it must be understood that although erotic works are not in museums, there are works that are nevertheless created by people who are not professional artists, in quotes. But what we call: Art Brut. Jean Dubuffet, was a great discoverer... He visited asylums, he discovered and collected art works and he founded the Museum of Art Brut in Lausanne thanks to him. So, I'm going to talk about a few works of Art Brut.

Here is a work that I love, *The Person Becomes Essential* by Helga Sophia Goetze, she embroiders tapestries like this that are in the museum of Art Brut in Lausanne and she always talks about sexuality but also about what we had seen before in tribal societies: her family, the way people are interconnected with each other and so these works are beautiful! Here's a male artist so he's dreaming about women in garters and stockings and his sex is symbolised by rockets; I think it's beautiful!

We're a little over time and so I really want to thank you for coming; we'll continue this conference next time! Thank you all, go home safe and happy Valentine's Day! Goodbye and thank you!