

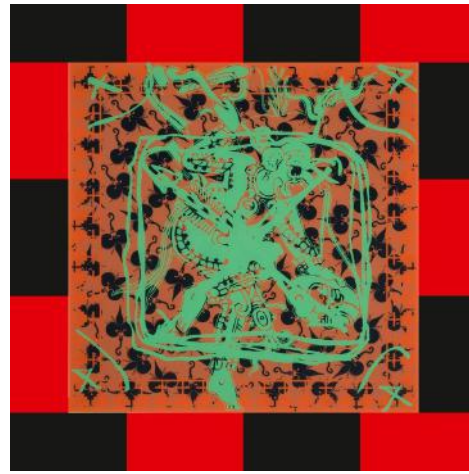
Jean-Pierre

Exhibits in:
France
Canada
the US
Switzerland
England
Austria
China.

Studios in Brooklyn, Chelsea, Queens



Art, like sex, has to do with the transcendences of reality, colours, pleasure and death.



Jean-Pierre Sergent - French artist, born in the small town of Morteau (1958) in the northeast of France. Studied architecture in Strasbourg and painting at l'école des Beaux-Arts in Besançon (1978-1981). Jean-Pierre settled in Montreal (1991-1992) where he developed his repertoire of artistic form and had successively three studios in New York in Brooklyn, Chelsea and Queens (1993-2003), then he returned home to his native France again (2004) in the City of Besançon where he is living and working now. He has exhibited in France, Canada, the US, Switzerland, England, Austria and China.

He tells Luxury Splash of Art that 'Firstly, you need to learn a lot of things, to read a lot of books, to see a lot of movies, to visit a lot of museums, to live a lot of life experiences, to visit a lot of countries, to have a lot of sex, to paint a lot of paintings... before you can even know really what you want and can do. What will be your personal artistic path?

Luxury Splash of Art: Jean-Pierre it is the greatest pleasure to talk to you, thank you for your time to share your artistic life story with us. Today, I would like to talk to you about your artwork, your projects, inspiration, spirituality and your current exhibition 4 Pillars of the Sky at the Besançon Fine Arts & Archeology Museum but before we get to these questions, can you please tell us more about yourself. When your journey with art started? What is it in art that makes you so passionate about it?

JPS: Hello dear Agnieszka and Luxury Splash of Art readers, thanks for your interest in my art and for your questions. Being a visual artist is to embrace the oldest profession in the world, with all due respect to prostitutes, that we commonly say they have been doing their work since the beginning of time. In any case, when we think about the first traces of humanity, beyond all the skeletons and genetic material found by archaeologists like skeletons and cave settlements, artists have been able to be traced back to the first milestones of human thoughts and beliefs. So, artist, as a profession, a specification, is without a doubt significantly older than priesthood, architects, warriors, farmers, politicians, insurers or even bankers! And it is like belonging to a long lineage, a large family or some kind of "old souls club". Picasso once said in an interview with the famous French writer and Minister of Culture André Malraux in *Le Miroir des limbes*: "Do you know what I think sometimes? It amuses me: I'm superstitious. I think it's always the same Little Man, from the stone ages. He comes back, like the wandering Jew. Painters inevitably reincarnate as painters; it's a breed, like cats."

So, being an artist is being part of an everlasting community and at the same time having a need to be outside, on the fringe of main societies in which we are living, in order to better understand the whole picture. There is also a point of being some kind of healer, as well, because Art is always deeply connected to Death, Art is always engraved in its essence, the pilgrim of Death and the remembrance of the dead, truly more deeply than Love, I believe. As Henry Miller said in *Remember to Remember*: "The human mission on earth is to remember." Without artwork, we will have no ideas in a manner of speaking about all the existences of all historical Gods and Goddesses, all rituals that the pictures and statues accompanied and depicted and made possible; it would be a disenchanted and memoryless World. Somehow Art is the incarnation of the living into its present, its movement and its realization. Not only has it nourished the personal and collective unconscious, but it is and has been a support for all "spiritual" practices starting a long time ago and continuing in the present.

As for what is Art for me: in a few words, I have been making it since I was a child and have continued to make it in an uninterrupted process to the present. As a child, I suffered from a terrible asthma attack, so painting images of animals and landscapes gave me a marvellous way to escape my suffering and the strong anxieties of being afraid of dying by suffocation. It is also this important dimension that I would like to evoke here, which is the strong healing power of Art, for oneself and for others. I believe that art can be experienced as a revelation, that's what happened to me during various trips to Egypt (into the tomb of Queen Nefertari in Luxor), and in Mexico, while visiting the sacred pyramids like Chichén Itzá or Uxmal. In a certain way, one needs to experience Art with their full-body, not only with their mind, their knowledge or with image reproductions. It's at the same time a physical (sensual) and spiritual experience. Art helps one to feel the constant flux of life energies, as blood, as rivers, as stars... It's part of belonging to the Universe and being connected somehow. At some point, it's also a language that needs to be learned, to be initiated into. Coming back to Picasso saying: "When people want to understand Chinese, they think: I have to learn Chinese, don't they? Why they never think they have to learn painting?"

The Beating Heart of the Most Dynamic Art Scene

LSA: Once you said that you are 'Making art alive in a society which is spiritually dead.' can you please tell me more about this? Should art touch soul, or should it sell? Perhaps both? What is your view?

JPS: Yes, exactly, I always enjoy rereading this sentence, because to tell you the truth, if you profoundly open your eyes and seek reality, we are currently facing a deep, profound and desperate situation, almost an apocalyptic one. I will spare you the list of bad news for your own good. But what strikes me most emotionally is really to have the feeling of the disappearance of spirituality or of spiritualities, leading de facto to the disappearance of the soul. A few months ago, I wrote a small text about that matter: About the disappearance of the soul today

After having read Maurice Maeterlinck's nice book 'The Treasure of the Humble' where he states: "There really are centuries when the soul goes back to sleep and no one cares about it anymore." and even General De Gaulle when interviewed in the same Malraux book, said roughly the same thing: "And if our civilization is certainly not the first one to deny the immortality of the soul, it is the first for which the soul has absolutely no importance."

Those sentences are deeply moving for me and as an artist, I can't imagine living in a world totally secularised and deprived of any spirituality. In a matter of fact, my artistic practice allows me to exhibit my works in galleries, Art Fairs and Museums and I always have the feeling that the audience as a whole or even curators or art critics, in particular, don't have any clue, any access to the strong and powerful spiritual meaning, presence and statements of my paintings. But again, to quote Malraux's book: "The time of art does not coincide with that of the living." So, I have to deal with that. It's been somewhat of a constant challenge for all important artists throughout time. Especially, even more, today, since Art, by and throughout the Art Market, the Art business, has really become an industrialized and economically luxurious good, that only really highly rich people can afford to buy and exhibit. It is a new situation that somehow nobody had thought of before. Art being stolen by the rich and powerful, somehow, it's happened before with the religions and the political powers, but at that time Art was supposed to educate the masses or nonbelievers, it could always be seen by everybody in churches, temples or public buildings; which is no longer the case nowadays where most of the art pieces bought in the auctions houses are ending up locked down in private and secure safes. Also, for example, when you are checking the Artprice list, you can see that art is selling for millions of dollars, but the really dark side or downside of that is that nobody is looking at the artwork of artists who don't sell at that high price range level (under \$100,000 US, you are a nobody, a poor John Doe), those kinds of artists can't exist and survive anymore somehow.



Firstly, you need to learn a lot of things...

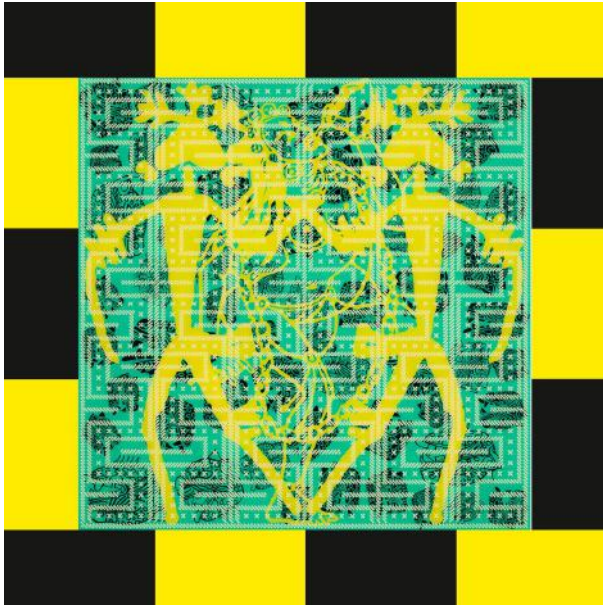
LSA: Thank you so much for sharing your view, it is very interesting what you say. Spirituality is very important to you is that the message you want to deliver through your art? What would you like others to see in your work?

JPS: Well, Art cannot just only be a conveyor of a message, an aesthetic, political, environmental, ideological or even spiritual one, but most precisely and truthfully a conveyor of pure energy. It's something that should hit you in the gut, genitals, eyes, and emotions. It's a power, like a nuclear battery, a storm, a vortex, a woman's pussy, a flux, like a parade, a carnival, a skeletons procession (not like the funny Halloween parade on 6th Avenue in NY) and also, simultaneously a swirling butterfly in a ray of sunshine in the soft light of Spring finally returned!



More seriously, I want my art to testify, to be the witness, the landmark, the emblem of the presence of any disappearing myriad of primitive societies and traditional cultures that at some point in time, some time periods, were alive and flourished all around the world. As stated recently on a radio interview the great street life photographer Sabine Weiss: "Everything changes! But it's good to have been a photographer to witness many beautiful things that will disappear."

So, I do have a strong and passionate curiosity towards those different cultures, different thinking, different lovemaking, sexual approaches or ritual practices in order to honour the dead, to regenerate and to and revitalize Life, our life, somehow, somewhere, because nothing is granted for free in this world. This could be philosophical, like Buddhism, or Hinduism; or aesthetical, like almost every pre-Colombian artwork like that of Mayan Queen Lady Xoc performing a blood sacrifice passing a rope through a hole in her tongue in order to fall in a trance and be met by the Cosmic Vision Serpent Quetzalcoatl. Sometimes I do also use Japanese bondage images in order to show how an enchained body can access sexual ecstasy by switching anxiety into climax. Art, like sex, has to do with the transcendences of reality, colours, pleasure and death.



I AM MAKING ART ALIVE IN A SOCIETY WHICH IS SPIRITUALLY DEAD

LSA: Some artists say that art and creation is like meditation, it allows one to feel connected with inner self & universe. What do you think?

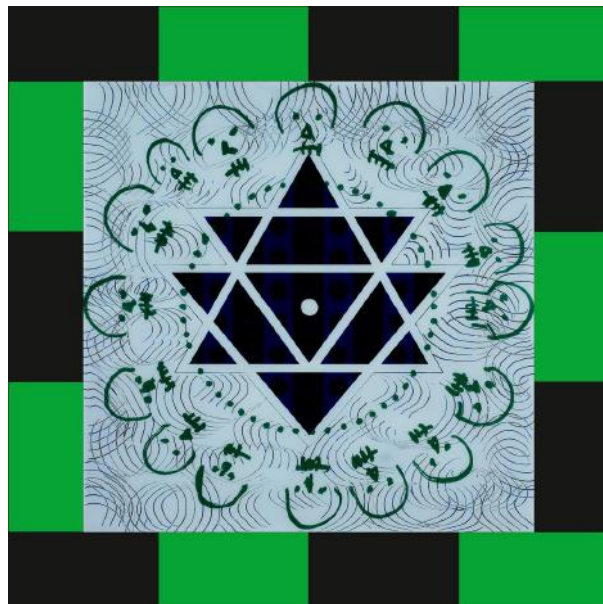
JPS: Yes, that's absolutely true. It is a long and fastidious working process, all along, an artist needs to be fully focused and present. You need to pay attention to what you are doing at every step, at every moment of this process and if you are not present, you will miss it. Of course, it's like any mainstream common spiritual teaching from every part of the World: If I am present, God (whoever or whatever it is) should be present too. As said in the Indian Veda:

"I have embraced all beings,

in order to see the taut thread of the sacred,

where the gods, having attained immortality,

have gone to their common abode." In JPS Notes Besançon - 2005-présent



LSA: Where do you take the inspiration from for your projects and how long it takes from the moment the process of creation starts in your head to the moment it is ready. Do you allow yourself to be led by intuition or rather to have every step planned?

JPS: At first, I collect, gather, and glean images. Images depicting ancient rituals from different societies, as I said earlier. While in NY, I used to take many photos in Museums, but now I get them mostly from the web and mainly erotic ones. It is a fact that about 50% of images circulating on the Web are pornographic ones, and it seems to me that some of them, a few rare ones, possess a kind of mystical ecstatic aura. That's what has caught my interest in every art piece throughout all Art History: its aura, its presence. One can see it in Vermeer's, Giotto's, Pollock's, Rothko's works, some cave paintings, graffiti pieces or many Mughal Indian paintings, and also of course among the so-named "primitive" artworks etc. So, in choosing a simple popular common image (like the Pop artists in NY in the '60s have done), not of great importance or meaning; I am transforming it into some kind of an iconic image. It's of course done throughout the lengthy process of selecting the image, the lengthy process of redesigning it on my computer and selecting it according to the statement I want to make at the time when I finally silkscreen this image on my printing table. Of course, the silkscreening process also requires a lot of preparation, when I am printing out the images and especially when I choose the colour. Throughout this process, I am using my intuition and my spiritual connection with art in general, the sun, the water, my ancestors, the bees, the ground (the soil) or any of my sexual desires...



LSA: In your artwork you use different methods and mediums; you create large installation, paint, sculpt, sketch, you do the scenography... What is your favourite method of expressing yourself and why? Is the process of creating your art challenging, if so - in what way?

JPS: Yes, I like to do a lot of those things passionately and all the ways of expressing myself are important in the present and more a posteriori, as life is always changing and something you were able to do a few years ago, you aren't able to do now, due to a lack of money or other studio problems etc. That's why I also like writing texts which doesn't cost anything (mostly throughout some years of poverty, as I don't always have enough money to buy art supplies!) Writing is also important for me, not to justify myself, nor to explain the work, but in order to say a similar thing in a different way. We all know that to access the knowledge and memory centre in our brains, every channel is legitimate. A few years ago, I also started filming video interviews with friends in my studio. I do believe it's a great change in live today with the new technological possibilities which allow us to use all of those different mediums that can easily be shared on the web. I am not quite sure if it does have the same impact as the physical experience that one can have in front a painting, but at least it could open the doors for new people to get a glance at my art.



LSA: I would like to ask you about your 4 Pillars of the Sky exhibition in Besancon museum. This exhibition is your latest project bringing eight large installations together. Can you please tell me more about these art pieces? What inspired you to create them, how they were created and is there any message to the world behind your artwork?

JPS: Yes, since September 2019, 72 square Plexiglas paintings, each measuring 1.05 x 1.05 m, have been installed on eight panels surrounding the four corners of the Museum's two huge main staircases. This monumental installation, 4 Pillars of the Sky measuring eighty square metres in size is to this day the largest I have realised. These exhibitions were proposed by the Museum Director, M. Nicolas Surlapierre, who had this great idea to hang up this huge selection of paintings amongst this beautiful historic architecture, with origins dating back to 1694 and is the oldest French public collection. It has been a really challenging project as technicians worked for more than a month in order to affix the wood panels to the old stone walls which are very high. The assistants and I had to work high up on the scaffoldings at a height of more than 5 m.

It is a great honour and privilege to have my works shown in this beautiful space where all the paintings assembled and connected together are really amazing and could hopefully bring the viewer into a state, an experience of joy, of elevation aesthetically or even mystically. The show will probably run for a few years and a catalogue has been published. I gave a conference at the Museum and we filmed three interviews with art professionals/friends that you can see on my video webpage. Here is an extract from the press release:

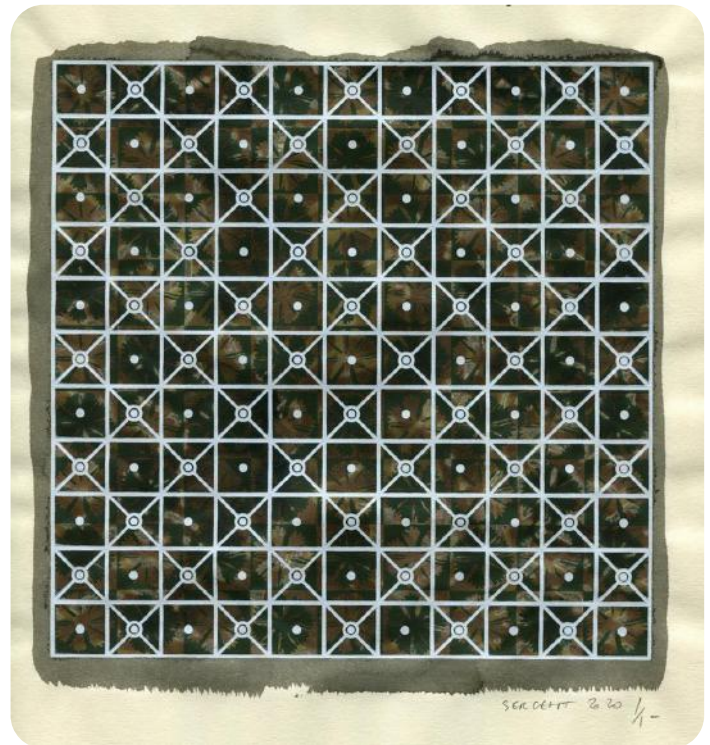
I want my paintings and art to be: a wall-art (even armour if you will! I don't care!), an art-architecture (like Indian tipis), an animal-art (like Lascaux), an art-tree, a river-art, a void-art (like for Zen Buddhist monks), a nature-art, a sex-art, an art-dead (like Egyptian tombs), an art-pleasure (Dionysian), an art-presence, an art-soul, an art-joy (like in Jean Giono's books), an art-body (like in sexuality) etc. So, there is not really a singular and simple message there, as my art is highly complex and it's more a conglomerate, an aggregation of images, a multitude of visual information, of stimulus impulses like the deployment, the blooming, the sprouting out, the ejaculation of an entire life, colourful, multicultural and sexual!

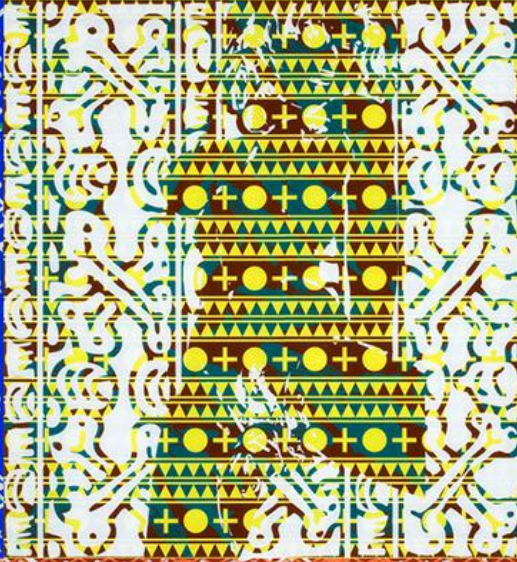
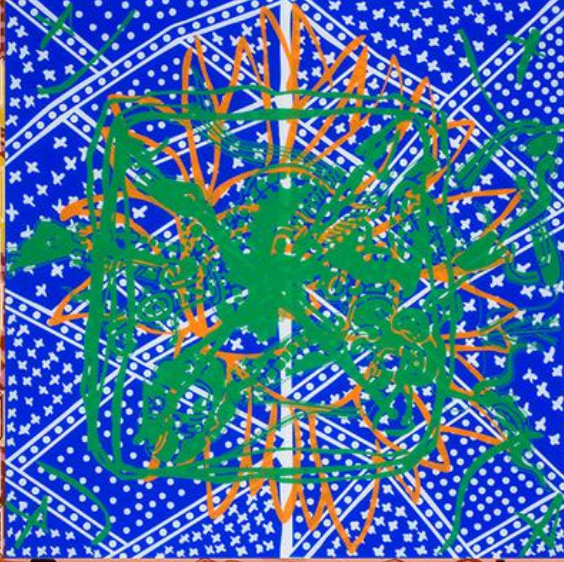
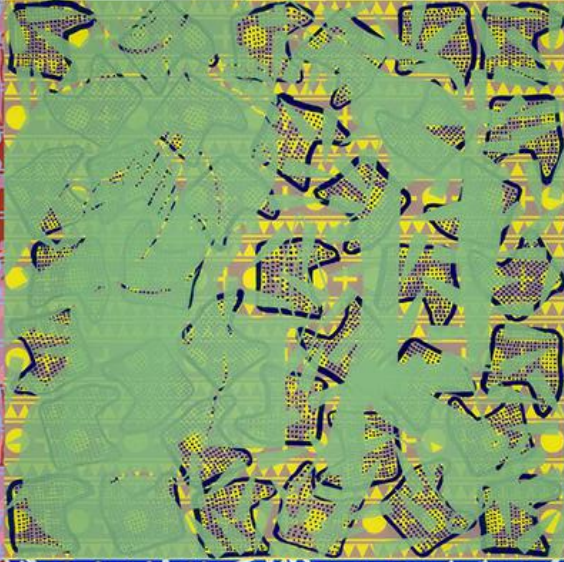
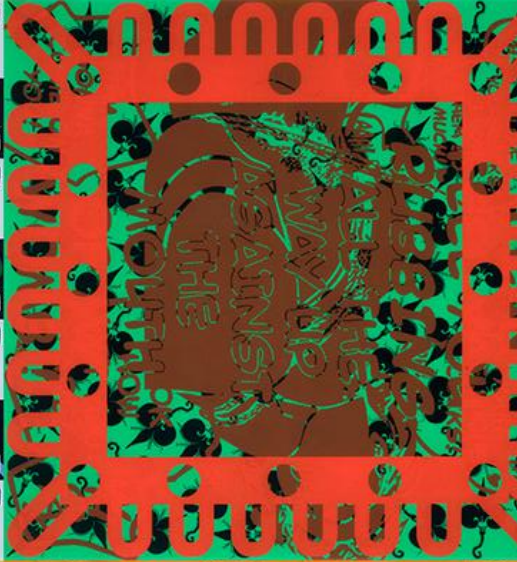
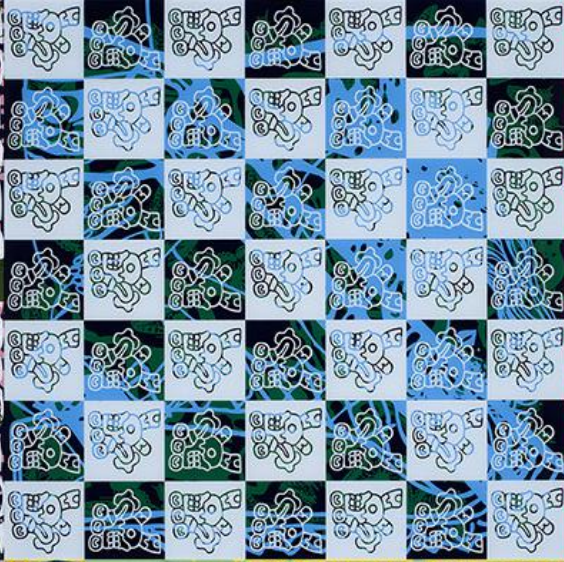
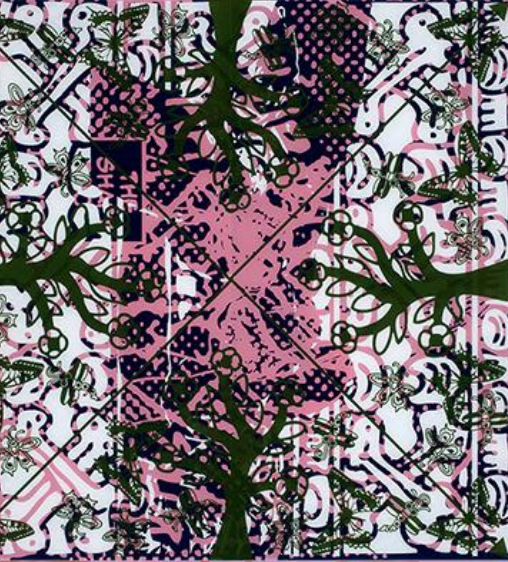
LSA: Is there any message you would like to share with Luxury Splash of Art readers?

JPS: Firstly, thank you very much for having read this article to the end, I hope you found it interesting and enriching. Secondly, I would like to quote the German painter Emil Nolde: "I obeyed an irresistible need to represent a deep spirituality." Which profoundly shows us how the spiritual meaning, the spiritual seeking and the spiritual quests are important, even essentials for some artists, not for all of them! Paradoxically enough, it is something that seems totally absent from the art scene production nowadays. For we live today in a society mainly and solely based on money, which is the only supreme value worshipped as the biblical golden calf, and this de-spiritualization is, therefore, more than normal, for money, of course, has no intrinsic spiritual value (in and of itself!)

LSA: Do you have any advice for starting artists?

JPS: Yes absolutely, Art is not an easy business, and time, is at the same time our friend and our enemy, as one can't really be a fully grown artist before the age of maturity, excepted for a few rare exceptions; all artists have done their important works during their years of maturity. So, you need to be enormously curious and profoundly patient. I just read an article on Twitter this morning about the famous Swiss writer-traveller Ella Maillart saying: "I had a sleeping bag, two weeks' worth of food on my back and I thought, I must go and see the beauty of the world while waiting to find out why I am alive." It is a fact, a reality: firstly, you need to learn a lot of things, to read a lot of books, to see a lot of movies, to visit a lot of museums, to live a lot of life experiences, to visit a lot of countries, to have a lot of sex, to paint a lot of paintings... before you can even know really what you want and can do. What will be your personal artistic path? Getting back to Picasso, he once said: "You copy, you copy, and then one day you are missing a copy and then, you make an original painting."





LSA: It was a great pleasure talking to you. Thank you for your time. All the best to you and your future projects. Where can we find your work, please share the link to your website and social media.

JPS: Yes, it has been a great pleasure to write this article, thank you so much for your interesting questions, dear Agnieszka. My work can be seen at the Museum in my hometown Besançon (when it reopens), in my Studio and at the Keller Galerie in Zürich, Switzerland. Your readers can also follow me on various social media, and I will be more than happy to follow-up on this discussion with them. I am wishing you all a safe and joyous day and a safe journey during these difficult and challenging times, best regards from France.

Interview by Agnieszka Kowalczevska

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Jean-Pierre Sergent

