

Natalie Coural

Papers Under Attack - The Case of Some French Artists at the End of the 20th Century

For centuries, artists have cherished beautiful papers which they chose with great care for various purposes. However, as early as the Middle Ages, there were works made on poor paper, or on scrap paper when it was necessary to study, or to practice, to be able to save money. In the twentieth century, the rules were turned upside down. From the moment of Cubism with the diffusion of glued papers: cut, torn, folded, crumpled, sometimes ruined, an irreversible evolution occurred. Barely later, with the avant-garde artists of the Dada and Surrealism movement, the reclamation of papers of all kinds will triumph.

This contribution concerns several French artists of the last quarter of the XXth century and the beginning of the XXIst century who transfigure the material paper in its structure, denaturing it deeply. Some burn it (Christian Jaccard), scrape it (Daniel Chompré), and perforate it in multiple ways (Dominique de Beir). Others, like Claude Viallat, glue it and play on its deterioration in the light. The artist Pierre Buraglio assembles hundreds of blue cigarette packets, the popular Gauloises, with scotch tape.

Artists have been questioned about their choice of paper, such as Canson paper, wrapping paper, blotting paper, and waste paper. They were also asked what tools they use to treat and abuse the papers. The approach of certain artists led them to foresee the passage of time which transforms or often deteriorates the paper. They were also questioned on how these atypical works could be presented, preserved and restored.

Key words:

Recycled paper, burnt paper, Christian Jaccard, Pierre Buraglio, Claude Viallat, Dominique De Beir, Daniel Chompré