The Myth of Nouveau Réalisme
Art and the Performative in Postwar France

Kaira M. Cabañas

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Cover illustrations: (*front*) Yves Klein, *Le Saut dans le vide*, 1960. Black-and-white photograph of artistic action at 5, rue Gentil-Bernard, Fontenay-aux-Roses. In Klein's newspaper *Dimanche*, the title of this work is *Un homme dans l'espace! Le peintre de l'espace se jette dans le vide!* Photo Shunk-Kender © Roy Lichtenstein Foundation. Courtesy Yves Klein Archives; (*back*) Yves Klein, *Obsession de la lévitation (Le Saut dans le vide)*, 1960. Black-and-white photograph of artistic action at 5, rue Gentil-Bernard, Fontenay-aux-Roses. Photo Shunk-Kender © Roy Lichtenstein Foundation. Courtesy Yves Klein Archives.

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Let This Be Said and Done

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Cover, Yves Klein, *Yves Peintures*, 1954. Printed paper, 9 5/8 × 7 1/2 in. (24.4 × 19.1 cm).

22
Preface pages, Yves Klein, *Yves Peintures*, 1954. Printed paper, 9 5/8 × 7 1/2 in. (24.4 × 19.1 cm).

In 1954, after sojourns to learn and teach judo in Tokyo and Madrid respectively, Yves Klein initiated his public career as a painter with the production of a small catalog titled *Yves Peintures*. Measuring approximately 9 5/8 by 7 1/2 inches (24.4 × 19.7 cm), *Yves Peintures* mimicked contemporary catalogs, comprising a cover, preface, plate pages with captions, and colophon, while a high-quality stock also signified a deluxe edition. Upon opening the catalog, however, Klein's contemporaries would have discovered that, except for "Préface" at the top of the first page and "Pascal Claude" at the bottom of the third, Klein had replaced the descriptive and often belletrist language common to contemporary prefaces with black horizontal lines, whose typographic withdrawal indicated only the formal layout of paragraphs and sentence breaks (figs. 21, 22).

Following the "preface" were ten plate pages that showcased an array of monochrome work varying in color and size. Here, rather than employ photomechanical reproduction, Klein pasted commercially inked colored papers on the pages. In addition, the papers' captions included the artist's first name, city, year, and dimensions, without providing any titles for the works. Hence the page with the reddish brown paper was accompanied by the caption "YVES/A MADRID, 1954 (146 × 89)"; the yellow paper, by the caption "YVES/A TOKIO, 1953 (100 × 65)"; the ultramarine, by " YVES/A LONDRES, 1950

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Plate pages, Yves Klein, *Yves Peintures*, 1954. Printed paper, 7 1/2 × 9 5/8 in. (19.1 × 24.4 cm).

(195 × 97)"; and so on (fig. 23). Finally, a conventional colophon succeeded the plates, conveying that a master printer in Spain had printed the catalog in a limited edition of 150 copies.

Yves Peintures—with black lines instead of a preface, single-color papers instead of photographic reproductions, city of production instead of titles—disturbed contemporary catalog conventions by transforming their usual content while upholding their structure.[1] What is more, the represented works' measurements, which were bereft of any additional metric notation (such as "cm"), actually corresponded to the height and width in millimeters of the papers literally pasted therein rather than to any previous work Klein had produced.[2] Hence the effect of *Yves Peintures* derived not from its fidelity to a preexisting referent or monochrome painting that could confirm the "true" or "false" nature of its reproductions but rather from the way Klein adapted catalog conventions so as to activate a process by which the catalog's form and material made *Yves Peintures* appear referential.

Given the absence of any painting that corresponded to Klein's "reproductions," the question of *Yves Peintures* becomes how Klein mobilized the performative efficacy of catalog conventions. In *Yves Peintures* these conventions both describe and present the work while simultaneously "creating" that which they describe. The catalog produces the professional-biographical effect of an international painter—traveling from Madrid to Tokyo—whose monochrome work dated to 1950. *Yves Peintures* appropriates an institutional context in which painting is understood as "Painting," consequently transforming the individual Yves Klein into the painter "Yves." Klein's authority as a painter was retroactively produced. In short, the catalog invented at once the artist and his work.[3] At stake in Klein's work is how such discursive acts create rather than confirm an already existing reality. In the course of his work he would mine such a discursive performativity, extending from the history of painting to the history of France. In so doing, he exposes the "false" origins of the performative, while his work nevertheless profits from its attendant real effects.

Color as Convention

In July 1955, Klein submitted an orange monochrome, *Expression de l'univers de la couleur mine orange* (1955), to the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, a salon dedicated to abstract art. The painting's uniformly covered surface abandoned color relations; thus, although abstract, Klein's work was rejected by the jury. That October, Klein held his first semipublic exhibition, *Yves Peintures,* at the Club des Solitaires, presenting (months later) monochromes similar to those ostensibly reproduced in the catalog of the same name (fig. 24). His accompanying text evokes a desire to "individualize color," justifying his refusal to "provoke color relations."[4] With these works, Klein explicitly jettisoned the expressive mark-making proper to Art Informel in favor of the gestureless presentation of pure material pigment: the industrial paint roller replaced the paintbrush, the mechanical gesture the expressive one. Furthermore, at this time, he was already working with a *droguiste* in Paris to locate a special fixative medium that would adhere pigment to canvas without muting its coloristic effects.[5] Yet Klein's seemingly empirical presentation of pure pigment—color in its raw material state—simultaneously courted an experience of color's subjective perception, which Klein recoded as "pictorial sensibility." While the paint roller served to reduce and standardize his monochromes, guaranteeing their antiexpressive effect, Klein nevertheless conceived of the colored surfaces as "poetic moments" full of "poetic energy" and as a living material: "the paintings are living presences."[6]

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Installation view, *Yves Peintures*, Club des Solitaires, Paris, 1956.

25
Installation view, *Yves Klein: Proposte Monochrome, Epocha Blu*, Galleria Apollinaire, Milan, January 1957.

In 1954 Klein created a storyboard for a prospective film titled *La guerre (de la ligne et de la couleur) ou (vers la proposition monochrome)* (The war [of line and color] or [toward a monochrome proposition]). Although the film was never realized, Klein's script outlines the legacy of *disegno* versus *colore,* as instantiated in the history of art.[7] Klein's insistence on color over line is maintained throughout his writings, wherein he continually thematizes color's historical status as both supplement and sensible impression, reversing its secondary status in idealist aesthetic discourse and explicitly aligning himself with colorists such as Eugène Delacroix.[8] With this discursive history of color, Klein proceeds by privileging the supplemental over the essential: color is "more natural and human" and "is nothing but sensitivity turned into matter, matter in its primordial state."[9] Alternatively, line constitutes our "psychological boundaries, our history, our education";[10] "the spectator [*le lecteur*] of a painting with lines, forms, composition, remains prisoner of his/her five senses."[11] Moreover, Klein decided, in part due to contemporary critics' insistence on reading his variously colored monochromes as a relational and decorative design within the architecture of Colette Allendy's exhibition space, to reduce his choice of pigment to one color: blue.[12]

In January 1957 at the Galleria Apollinaire in Milan, Klein inaugurated his "Epocha Blu" (Blue Epoch) by choosing to exhibit monochrome paintings of identical color, International Klein Blue (IKB), and identical size, each 30 3/4

by 22 inches (78 × 56 cm). The works, like his earlier monochrome experiments, were individually executed with a paint roller using his special pigment-fixative mixture. By altering the conventions of exhibition display, Klein staged a bodily encounter with the monochrome work. The eleven monochromes literally inhabited the viewer's space: they were presented at varying heights on stanchions that were sited approximately eight inches (20 cm) away from the wall, emphasizing the works' objectlike quality as the color extended around the edges of the panels (fig. 25). The homogeneous color and standardized size of the panels fueled the exhibition's controversial reception, even as Klein asserted the differences between the serialized works: "Each blue world of each painting, although the same blue and treated in the same manner, revealed itself to be of an entirely different essence and atmosphere; none resembled another, no more than pictorial moments or poetic moments resemble one another."[13] Klein upholds the pure materiality of the pigment and secures its almost scientistic application. But he ignores the possible variations of the color's application—variations that might result from differences in saturation due to roller pressure, the roller's width, whether the roller was new or already used, how pigment might cluster in some areas and not evenly spread, thereby producing various textures across the surfaces of the monochromes. Instead, Klein takes color's subjective perceptual effects as given, assuming that differences in material would not interfere with the experience of what he calls "pictorial moments."

The history of color in painting coincides in the nineteenth century with developments in the science of color (notably through the work of Michel Eugène Chevreul, whom Klein also mentions in his film script).[14] Within this broader discursive field, color is described as positivist material and symbolist illusion, empirical fact and perceptual contingency, visual immediacy and bodily production: both material and immaterial. Klein takes up this inherent duality. The material (pigment) and immaterial (perceptual, contingent effects) become the primary terms for defining and legitimating his monochrome work. Yet for the Milan exhibition Klein retroactively inscribes color's individual, subjective perception under the banner of commercial exchange. He explains, "The most sensational observation was that of the buyers. Each [buyer] selected out of the eleven paintings her/his one, and each paid the asking price. The prices were all different of course. This fact proves that the pictorial quality of each painting was perceptible through something *other than the physical appearance,* on the one hand, and, on the other hand, that those who selected recognized that state of things that I call 'Pictorial Sensibility.'"[15]

If color has been increasingly delocalized through its industrialization—caught up in a system of exchange, from the color chart to the tube of paint and, in this case, powder pigment mixed with a patented synthetic resin—the Milan exhibition refuses color as essence or the foundation for a pure pictorial

language. Rather, Klein stages the limits of visual perception vis-à-vis color as commodity: International Klein Blue.[16] Furthermore, the pictorial in painting is discursively cleaved from any possible effects it might actually have in Klein's choice of blue paint. If modernist painters from Paul Signac to Wassily Kandinsky claimed pure color as a means by which to achieve pure painting, for Klein such a universal language stemmed neither from painting's internal color relations nor from its physical appearance. Klein not only rewrites the contingency of color perception as an arbitrary function of exchange but also insists on the viewer's "instantaneous contemplation,"[17] shifting his attention from the immanence of color perception to the immaterial transcendence of viewing. Here, the magic of the commodity and the contemplative viewing that subtends the discourse on modernist painting are made to coincide.

In his short essay "My Position in the Battle between Line and Color" (1958), Klein narrates the development of his work by evoking the history of color in art history. He describes his passage from the production of monochromes in multiple colors and sizes, to monochromes of identical color and size, to the eventual disappearance of his work and color altogether:

> I have pondered whether even color, in its physical aspect, has become finally for me also a limit and a hindrance to my effort to create perceptible pictorial states.
>
> In order to reach Delacroix's "indéfinissable," the very essence of painting, I have embarked on the "specialization" of space, which is my ultimate way of treating color. It is no longer a matter of *seeing* color but of *perceiving* it.
>
> My recent work with color has led me progressively and unwillingly to search for the realization of matter with some assistance (of the observer, of the translator), and I have decided to end the battle. My paintings are now invisible and these I would like to show in my next Parisian exhibit at Iris Clert's.[18]

Klein shifts from understanding color as a physical, material element that one sees to a "specialization" of space that one perceives, charting his search for a direct perceptual immediacy that ultimately led to his production of invisible work.

Color for Klein is neither color as applied to a canvas nor color as "coloris."[19] Rather, color—or, more precisely, the discourse on color—is a *convention*.[20] Klein insists on color as a discursive site in the history of painting, continually appealing to Delacroix's "indéfinissable" as the justification for his eventual abandonment of the painterly support. Given color's instability—an instability that derives, as noted above, from its dual status in the realms of science and art as material and immaterial—Klein severs color from pigment and painting

from its material support. Nevertheless, his discursive acts, from his published statements to his public speeches, continue to claim his works' conventional credibility *as* painting. But bereft of any physical relay between canvases and in the absence of any empirically given color, the question remains, how is one to perceive paintings that "are now invisible"?

Pictorial Intentions

> With Duchamp we had works having a reference both to an object and an attitude. In the case of Yves Klein, we have to do with an *attitude* alone. It is obvious that we are now virtually leaving the domain of painting, since there is no painting.
> —Georges Mathieu, "Towards a New Convergence of Art, Thought and Science," 1960

If *Yves Peintures* produced the artist "Yves" and his work, by what means did "Yves" in turn make visible his immaterial and invisible works? Was it, as Mathieu suggests, through the artist's "attitude" alone? To document his dual exhibition at the Galerie Colette Allendy and the Galerie Iris Clert in May 1957, Klein produced his first short film, posthumously titled *Yves Klein, propositions monochromes*.[21] Here what Klein calls "immaterial pictorial sensibility" becomes, as with *Yves Peintures*, an exercise in documentation—this time through the technological medium of film. The first part of Klein's (mock) documentary begins with a shot of Klein and Iris Clert entering the outdoor courtyard of Allendy's exhibition space. Next the film cuts to a medium close-up of a blue folding screen, a shot that continues by slowly panning from the left to the right and then cuts to pan from the bottom to the top of the screen. The two shots mimic, in their subjective point of view, the lines of sight of the work's unseen viewer. These shots are followed by a take of Clert and Bernadette Allain looking at a rectangle of pigment located on the floor below the screen; a close-up of a blue work; and a panning shot of the rectangle of pigment. The next shots introduce Klein's other monochromes across a range of supports, including a round disc, eight rectangular blocks arranged in two vertical lines on the wall (with a magic wand that appears to point them out), a monochrome of horizontal format, and the *tapisserie bleue* (blue tapestry) of vertical format. The sequence concludes with two final shots, in which Klein stands behind a table that displays a smaller version of the screen, followed by an image of Allain surrounded by a number of blue wands that swing back and forth from the ceiling (part of Klein's *pluie bleue* [blue rain]) (fig. 26).

26
Frame enlargements from Yves Klein, *Yves Klein, propositions monochromes*, 1957.

27
Frame enlargement from Yves Klein, *Yves Klein, propositions monochromes*, 1957.

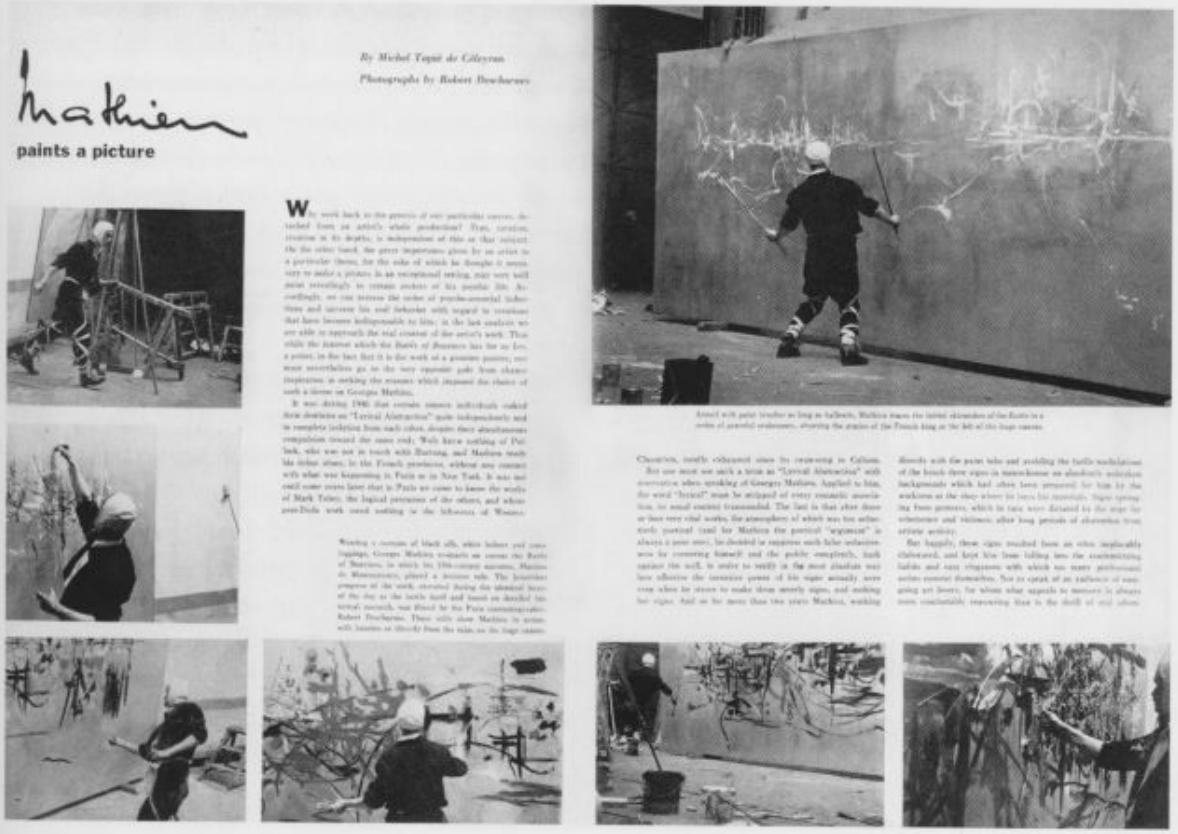
The film then cuts and frames two signs placed on the gallery wall: one is a poster announcement for Klein's dual exhibitions, and the other, with an arrow extending from its upper left-hand corner, reads: "Exhibition Continues on the 2nd Floor: Surfaces and Blocks of Pictorial Sensibility. Pictorial Intentions" (fig. 27).[22] This shot sets up the four to follow. The first shot in this second sequence begins by framing a radiator in the corner of the gallery. From here the camera pans up a white wall as Klein enters the frame from the right. The camera adjusts to frame Klein as he turns to face the wall, placing his hands in a gesture as if presenting an invisible painting. In the same position, Klein looks past the camera; then he turns back to look at the wall. After establishing the fact and location of what he is looking at, he releases his arms and adjusts his stance, continuing to look at the wall for an instant. The second shot begins with Klein walking toward the camera. In his right hand he holds a piece of paper, which in the gallery context reads as a brochure or price list. He turns to look at the wall from whence he came and is framed on the far right-hand side of the image, keeping the blank wall visible. From this position, Klein looks up and then looks down; he looks left and then brings his head back to the right and like an "art amateur" scrutinizes the wall, repeating the lines of sight—up/down, left/right—inscribed in the earlier sequence's subjective camera shots.[23] The film then abruptly cuts to Klein seen from behind (his arms locked behind him with the paper still in his hand) as he approaches the radiator. He turns around and sits down on the radiator top, still holding the brochure in his right hand. Klein leans back, slightly furrowing his brow and fixing his gaze on the wall to his left; he then turns to look at the space in the opposite direction; he looks down and finally looks straight at the camera as he stands up (fig. 28).

With the enactment of these pictorial intentions Klein presents no painterly gesture, no expressive facture, and no trace of brushwork. He avoids the indexical recording and instantiation of process as it is played out in paint (and the physicality and claim to presence of such gestural marks within the rhetoric

28
Frame enlargements from Yves Klein, *Yves Klein, propositions monochromes*, 1957.

29
Georges Mathieu featured in the article by Michel Tapié, "Mathieu Paints a Picture," *Art News*, February 1955. Photos Robert Descharnes. Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

of Art Informel and the work of Georges Mathieu, more specifically) and instead points to something that is otherwise unseen, a space he declares filled with "pictorial sensibility." Three years earlier, on April 25, 1954, within the context of the Salon de Mai, Mathieu had Robert Descharnes, a Paris cinematographer, film him as he painted *La bataille de bouvines* (8 ft. 2 1/2 in. × 19 ft. 8 1/4 in. [2.5 × 6 m]) during the same hours of the day that the historical battle took place. Photographs by Descharnes were subsequently reproduced in the February 1955 issue of *Art News*.[24] Here Mathieu literally acts out a historical battle in paint, forging a relation between the improvisation and speed of his painterly act and the historical battle, not only producing an action painting but accommodating painterly process to the narrative codes of an action film. The photographs proceed from Mathieu in the act of painting, or battling, to stills of the work's dénouement and hence the battle's completion (fig. 29). By contrast, Klein's film abandons the narrative registration of a climatic moment so as to record something invisible to normal perception and the camera alike. Even so, in order to make his pictorial sensibility legible, Klein performs the index. That is, he performs the bodily gesture that often supplements the articulation of "this" or "that," establishing a process of connection to an invisible referent.


Mathieu
paints a picture
By Michel Tapié de Céleyran
Photographs by Robert Descharnes

Given the title's insistence on pictorial *intentions*, Klein's performance in the second sequence of the film upholds an idealist construction of communication. By virtue of his phenomenal presence and, more important, his active pointing, Klein positions himself as a fully intentional subject, the addresser of his pictorial message to an unseen addressee. In this way, Klein puts an image of manifest artistic self-presence on view. With his rejection of the materiality and signification of painterly marks, Klein presumes the immediacy of his message and the plenitude of its meaning on account of its immateriality. If for Delacroix painting was both a "material process" and "mind . . . to mind" communication,[25] Klein drops the material process out of the equation so as to presuppose a homogenous space of communication. Materiality is abolished precisely to ensure that it not interfere with the content or meaning of the pictorial sensibility he purportedly transmits.

If the meaning of the "Surfaces and Blocks of Pictorial Sensibility" as presented in the film was thus organized by Klein's intention, Klein also performed his message's sequel—that is, his pictorial intention's reception by potential viewers. Where the first shot presented Klein the "artist" pointing to an invisible work, in shots two and three he performed the "art amateur" and "art buyer" (or dealer) respectively, and hence the successful fulfillment of his communicative act. As an art amateur, Klein performed the gaze over the surface of the unseen painting—up and down, left to right. Such a schematization of subjective viewing suggests less the immediate visual apprehension or transcendent status of a viewing subject than the standardization of aesthetic perception, one driven by formal relations internal to painting. Klein's physical performance undercuts his affirmation of "instantaneous contemplation" and at once suggests the viewing of compositional color relations that Klein's work had by then abandoned. Finally, as a potential buyer, Klein sat down and looked in the direction of the immaterial works with price list in hand, furrowing his brow in a gesture of a potential buyer's skepticism.

Each shot constitutes an art-viewing (and hence social) relation as the subject positions that a contemporary viewer might occupy—artist, amateur, buyer—are played out in turn. Klein's film reveals these relations between painting and viewers, proposing that his production of pictorial sensibility is far from the immaterial spatiality that he would eventually describe as a "pure phenomenology."[26] His work's constitution depends on these institutional relations and on its attendant signifying context—the white gallery space in which his intention unfolds—that produce the conditions for painting under determinate historical, social, and economic circumstances. Klein's performative enunciations prove the opposite of the immediacy he declares, because his body and the subject positions he feigns act in excess of the propositional content he puts forth.

While *Yves Peintures* activates conventions by which an artist's catalog appears as if referential, the reality of Klein's invisible pictorial sensibility is similarly an effect of how Klein assumes a set of practices that govern the appearance and efficacy of painting. This is perhaps nowhere more telling than in the film's final image sequence, in which Clert and Pierre Restany alternatively sign a contract in the gallery office, the space of economic transaction on which the autonomy of the white gallery walls depends (fig. 30). Rather than leave the "domain of painting" as per Mathieu, in Klein's film the rules of the game are played out, while the pictorial object these rules usually designate remains out of sight. Here painting succeeds on the basis of social relationships and not on the basis of its autonomy or even its materiality. Moreover, it is with the tension between what Klein says and the actual effects of his works that one can begin to situate his particular modality of performative realism: immaterial works pose a challenge to traditional referential signification at the same time that the conditions of possibility for what Klein designates—immaterial pictorial sensibility—are revealed to be *the means by which* he produces that which he names. Klein thereby shifts the terms of Duchamp's nominalist legacy from a consideration of what *object* might be called and subsequently inscribed as art to the *experience* of art that bourgeois social convention legislates (artist, amateur, buyer). Klein insists on authorial intention and the transcendent status of both artist and viewer, but his film produces the literal exteriorization and dispersion of painting's subject positions, showing these to be historically determined effects. In short, the "truth" recorded in Klein's film is not the immediacy of pictorial sensibility but its discursive organization.

30
Frame enlargement from *Yves Klein, Propositions monochromes*, 1957.

Klein's rejection of composition and illusionistic representation in the production of his monochrome work facilitated his initial rapprochement with Guy Debord. Debord had similarly rejected representational directives, but in the cinematic realm, as with his first film *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* (Howls for Sade, 1952). As a sound film without images, the alternating black-and-white sequences frustrated contemplative cinematic immersion. *Hurlements'* sound track consists of dialogue spoken by Debord's friends and fellow artists: the screen remains white when someone speaks, and when no one speaks the screen is black. With a total running time of one hour fifteen minutes, only twenty minutes contain light and sound. For the last twenty-four minutes the viewer sits in total darkness and silence.[27] In their shared desire to be rid of referentiality, both Debord and Klein aimed to do away with mediation in favor of directly lived momentary states, although they would pursue this end by utterly distinct means.

This shared end, however, in part explains why Klein's name appears on the program for the Première Exposition de Psychogéographie (First Psychogeographic Exhibition), which was presented by the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (IMIB), the Lettrist International (LI), and the London Psychogeographical Committee (LPC) at the Galerie Taptoë in Brussels. Opening on Saturday, February 2, 1957, less than one month after Klein's exhibition in Milan, the Taptoë exhibition represented the coming together of these three avant-garde movements and prefigured their merger six months later to form the Situationist International. But at this particular moment, Asger Jorn and Ralph Rumney still belonged to the IMIB and LPC, respectively, while Debord, Michèle Bernstein, and Mohamed Dahou officially formed part of the LI.[28]

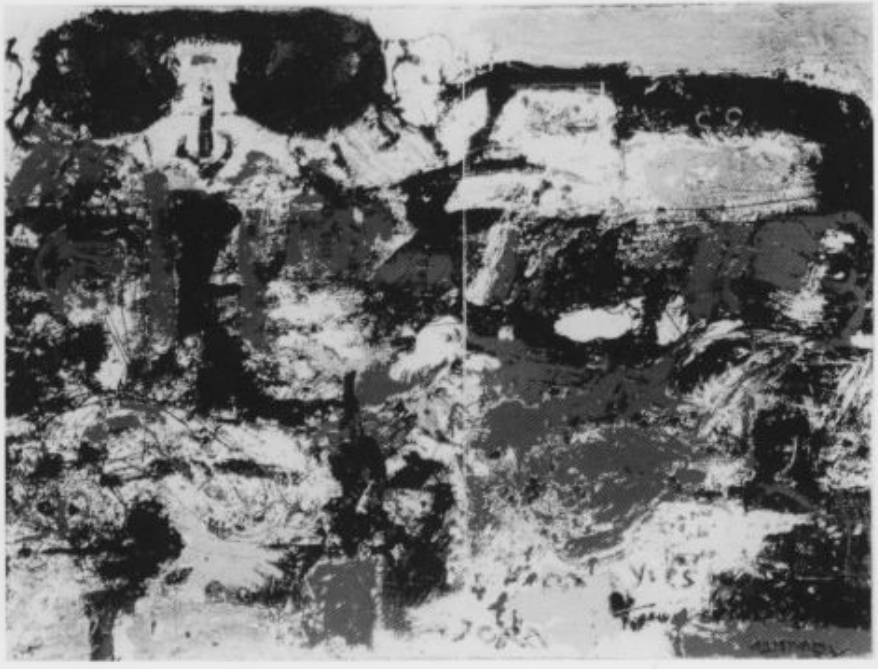
Today Klein's presence on this proto-Situationist program seems like a historical mix-up or even an outright error: one only has to fast-forward to the year 1960 and Klein's subsequent inscription into the Nouveaux Réalistes to arrive at this conclusion. Indeed, the Nouveaux Réalistes are generally considered diametrically opposed to the politicized SI and its critical engagement with modernist art and mass culture.[29] Moreover, by the time of Klein's participation in the Taptoë exhibition, Restany had already written two short essays on Klein's work, introducing both the artist's first exhibition at the Galerie Colette Allendy (1956) and the one at the Galleria Apollinaire (1957). Yet in February 1957, five months prior to the consolidation of the Situationist International, Yves Klein's potential membership in the SI remained a possibility. Similarly, Restany's role as the primary spokesperson for Klein's work was, at this point, far from determined.

The textual and visual evidence of Klein's relation to Debord in the years prior to the formation of the SI is admittedly scant. Debord reports that Klein

31
Asger Jorn, Yves Klein, Ralph Rumney, and Maurice Weyckaert, *Untitled*, 1957. Oil on canvas, 57 1/2 × 76 in. (146 × 193 cm). Private collection.

attended the first screening of *Hurlements* on June 30, 1952, at the Avant-Garde 52 film club.[30] Subsequently, the two reconnected upon Klein's definitive return to Paris in December 1954. As for Klein's participation in the Taptoë exhibition, Rumney wrote to Debord on the occasion of Klein's Milan exhibition and recommended his inclusion.[31] Brussels was also the location for Klein, Jorn, Rumney, and Maurice Wyckaert's collaboration on an abstract painting—its gestural brushstrokes with figural traces surely executed by the latter three, even though "Yves" is also painted in blue at the lower right (fig. 31).[32]

Approximately one month after the Taptoë exhibition, Debord writes in a letter to Piero Simondo, "I have already met Yves Klein, and one of his friends, two times since my return. They are very interested in what we are doing. I have given them a few texts so that we may discuss them. We'll see if we can come to an understanding."[33] Later that spring, Klein invited Debord and Bernstein for a studio visit and in this context asked Debord (not Restany) if he would write the essay for his forthcoming dual exhibition at the Galerie Colette Allendy and the Galerie Iris Clert. Debord declined. Nevertheless, Debord did attend Klein's exhibition, at least the part presented at the Galerie Colette Allendy. A photograph, undoubtedly taken by Klein during the duration of the show (May 14–23), pictures Clert, Debord, and Jorn standing, as Klein's handwritten caption explains, "In Colette Allendy's first-floor gallery where the surfaces and blocks of invisible pictorial sensibility were exhibited" (fig. 32).[34]



DANS LA SALLE AU PREMIER ETAGE CHEZ COLETTE ALLENDY on trouvait exposés les SURFACES et RYTHMES de STENBERG, L'ÉTÉ PICTURALE INUSITÉE. 254

32
Iris Clert, Guy Debord, and Asger Jorn at the exhibition *Yves Klein: Propositions monochromes*, Galerie Colette Allendy, Paris, 1957.

At the time Debord gave Klein the as-yet-unidentified and unlocated texts, the Lettrist International was exploring the role of space as it came to bear on the construction and representation of architectural and urban space more specifically. The title of the exhibition in Brussels, Première Exposition de Psychogéographie, refers to how these artists counteracted the alienation of the modern city with "psychogeography," a means by which to navigate the material arrangements of the built environment to consider its subjective effects and the production of "unities of ambience" at odds with the city's dominant pattern of development and circulation. In contrast to academic geography's recourse to classification and factual accumulation, in which space remains an immobile, passively measured world, psychogeography was based on an experience of space that was terrestrial, fragmented, subjective, and social.[35] Within the context of France's state-led modernization, psychogeography's objective was dual: it was archival, insofar as it searched out and recorded these ambiences before their disappearance; and it was political because it mandated the conscious alteration of everyday life within an era of instrumentalized spatial planning.

But where Debord and the LI's psychogeography was an attempt to produce a geography that considered space as a social product neither homogenous nor empty, Klein declared a space of "pictorial sensibility," upheld as a space of spiritual transcendence altogether at odds with Debord's materialist practice. That Klein maintained his membership with the Oceanside Rosicrucian Society from 1948 to 1953 and continued his study of Max Heindel's *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception* (1909), a work of mystical and occult science, is well documented. Klein was undoubtedly influenced by Heindel's conception of space: "There is no such thing as empty or void space . . . *space is Spirit* in its attenuated form; while *matter is crystallized space or Spirit*."[36] Indeed, Heindel's and Klein's statements are often similar, and at times identical.[37] Klein's thinly veiled appropriations of Rosicrucian cosmology provide the conditions for a persuasive spiritual reading of his work. Precisely such an avowed mysticism, according to Michèle Bernstein, foreclosed Klein's recruitment into the SI and also fueled Restany.[38] Rather than reinscribe the spiritual association on which Debord's and Restany's understandings of Klein depend, I want to put critical pressure on the historical and conceptual association between Debord and Klein in the years 1957–59. With their challenge to mediation, space eventually became the object and subject of much of their work, as they also shared a rejection of space reduced to the empiricist delineation and description of physical form. Nevertheless, the difference in practice hinges on the question of space's critical refunctioning versus its performative activation, and thus on the specificity of Klein's performative realism.

"Revolution through the void" (*Arts*); "Exhibition of white" (*La Croix*); "Long live nothing!" (*Noir et Blanc*): this is how the press regarded Yves KLEIN's last exhibition . . . one whitewashes the four walls of a gallery previously emptied of its contents. "Where are the paintings?" asks the adventurous visitor in that tabernacle, and here is Yves Klein's response, which, in the end, goes farther than his joke: "In his *Journal,* Delacroix's major concern is the notion of the indefinable [*indéfinissable*]. Me, I make it my essential material, a systematic utilization: the painting, on account of being indefinable, becomes absent."
—"Courrier des arts: A travers les galleries," *Le Monde,* May 23, 1958

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View from the street and installation view, *Specialization of Sensibility in the Raw Material State into Stabilized Pictorial Sensibility,* otherwise known as *Le vide,* Galerie Iris Clert, Paris, 1958.

On April 28, 1958 (also the artist's thirtieth birthday), Klein presented *Specialization of Sensibility in the Raw Material State into Stabilized Pictorial Sensibility* at the Galerie Iris Clert. Popularly referred to as *Le vide* (The void), the exhibition was divided into two parts. Upon arrival, visitors encountered the gallery windows painted in Klein's signature International Klein Blue, blocking any view into the interior or from the interior to the street outside. The gallery's street entrance was closed, and visitors entered the space through the neighboring alleyway, passing under long blue drapes that framed the entrance, where two private guards checked invitations and two Republican Guards dressed in full regalia were stationed. In the darkened passage, which also served as a reception area, visitors were offered cocktails of Cointreau, gin, and methylene blue. By passing through a second curtain at the back of the passageway, where two more guards restricted admittance to ten at a time, the visitors entered the gallery that Klein had repainted white.[39] The empty interior, Klein's space of pictorial sensibility, was to be perceived as the immaterialization of the blue exterior (fig. 33). Additionally, as part of the vernissage, Klein had planned to illuminate the obelisk at the Place de la Concorde in blue (fig. 34), but on opening day the prefect of police refused permission because of the "excessively personal character of the event."[40] Such then was the visible, material organization of the work's mise-en-scène.

With the aim of securing a sizable crowd for opening night, Clert and Klein sent out 3,500 invitations, each admitting two. Printed in relief with a blue cursive font on Bristol paper, the invitation mimicked official state invitations


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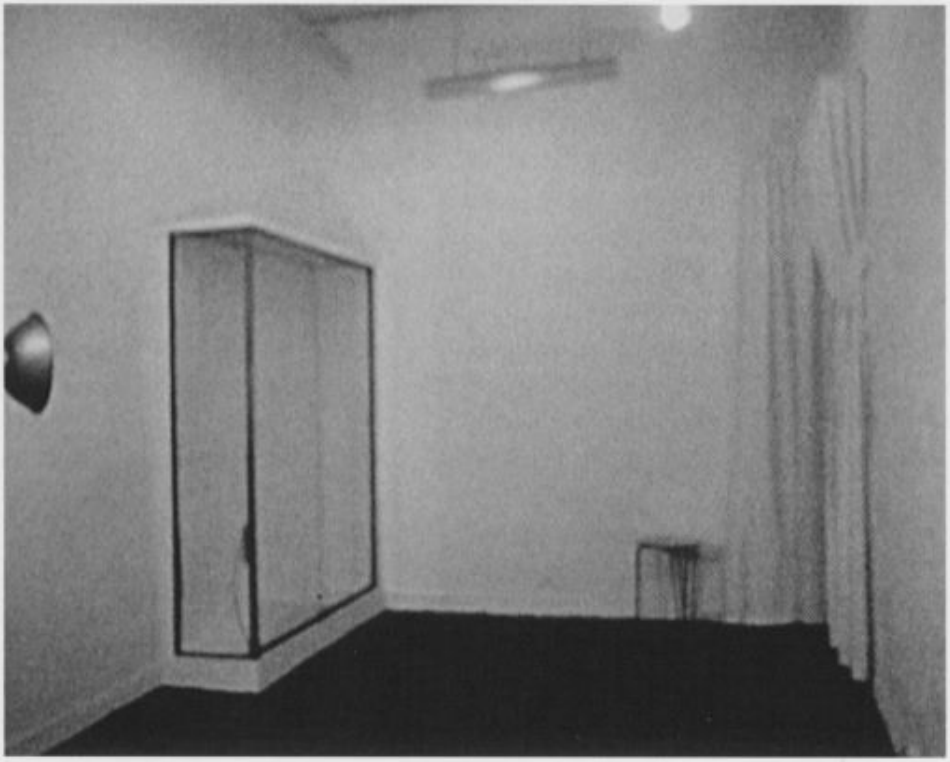

34
Obelisk, Place de la Concorde, Paris, illuminated with blue light in 1983, following Yves Klein's original 1958 proposal.

and departed from Klein's earlier invitations, which had been printed with a modern sans serif font. Penned by Restany, the invitation reads: "Iris Clert invites you to honor, with all your affective presence, the lucid and positive advent of a certain reign of the sensible. This event of perceptive synthesis sanctions Yves Klein's pictorial quest for an ecstatic and immediately communicable emotion." The card was placed in an envelope with a blue stamp on the outside, produced by Klein for the occasion.[41] Moreover, only by bringing the invitation to the opening did one receive free entry; otherwise visitors were charged 1,500 francs (at the time about $3.87) to compensate for what would be "stolen" from the exhibition's intensity through their "impregnation" in the space.[42]

Press responses at the time ran the gamut from describing the space's incalculable powers to denouncing the presentation of white walls as a joke. And while critics repeatedly insisted on the exhibition of "a white wall,"[43] Klein averred in a radio interview with André Arnaud for Europe 1, "I did not display color on the walls, it is an illusion, again one of the latest, because in reality what I want to present here this evening is not at all the walls of this gallery but the ambience of the gallery."[44] For Klein the work was not void, "because, in fact everything *happens in space* [*tout se passe dans l'espace*]."[45] Such a claim echoes the Rosicrucian conception of spiritual space, but Klein's comment also suggests that contemporary critics were taking the effect—an abstract homogenous space—for the cause, a property of the space for its essence.

Klein's description of the specificity of the experience generated by *Le vide* remains for the most part unexplored.[46] As narrated by Klein in his small book *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art* (Overcoming the problematics of art, 1959) under the section "Préparation et présentation de l'exposition du 28 avril 1958 chez Iris Clert," the crucial scene unfolds as follows:

> 8:45 P.M. I am at the Gallery. Final preparations.
>
> 9:00 P.M. Arrival of Republican Guards in full regalia.... Almost simultaneous arrival of four guards from a private security service. I explain to each his duty; they rehearse as the first visitors arrive...
>
> 9:30 P.M. Everywhere is packed, the passageway is full, the gallery as well. Outside the gathering crowd has difficulty penetrating the interior.
>
> 9:45 P.M. It is frenzied. The crowd is so dense that it cannot move anywhere. I stay inside the Gallery. Every three minutes, I shout in a loud voice to the people that are increasingly squeezing into the gallery (the security service is no longer able to contain them or regulate the entries and exits): "Mesdames, messieurs, please be so kind and not stay too long in the Gallery so that other visitors who are waiting outside may have their turn."
>
> 9:45 P.M. RESTANY arrives by car...

9:50 P.M. In the Gallery, I suddenly notice a young man drawing on one of the walls. I rush to stop him and I ask him, politely but very firmly, to leave. While accompanying him to the small door on the exterior of which the two guards are posted (the crowd in the gallery is silent and waits to see what will happen), I shout to the guards who are outside: *"Seize this man and throw him out with violence."* He is literally expelled and disappears caught by my guards.[47]

Written one year later, the text and the fact that Klein incorporated this violent scene deserve attention, especially given that *Le dépassement* is the only collection of his texts over which Klein exercised any oversight.[48] Framing the events in ten-minute intervals as they might unfold in a film script, Klein continues:

10:00 P.M. The police arrive in full force (three busses full) . . . firemen also arrive in full force . . .

10:10 P.M. 2,500 to 3,000 people are in the street; the police in the rue de Seine and the firemen in the rue Bonaparte are trying to push back the crowd toward the quays of the Seine. When a police patrol appears at the entrance to demand an explanation (some people, furious at having paid 1,500 francs admission to see, in their eyes, nothing at all in the interior, went to complain), my bodyguards laconically and firmly tell them, "We have a privately hired guard here, we do not require your services." The police cannot gain legal entry and retreat.

10:20 P.M. Arrival of a representative of the Order of St. Sebastian in full regalia (bicorne and cape with a red Maltese cross) . . .

On the whole, the crowd enters the Gallery angry and leaves completely satisfied. What the Great Press will be compelled to record officially in writing is that 40% of the visitors are positive, capturing the pictorial sensible state, and *seized by the intense climate that reigns, terribly, within the apparent void* of the exhibition.[49]

Given the absence of any photographs of *Le vide*'s opening—that is, no images of the police or firemen, the bodyguards, knights, or the crowd—Klein's text self-consciously crafts a firsthand account that both describes the event and reproduces it in the present.[50]

Beyond its specific form of verbal address, what Klein's text thematizes is the presentation of Iris Clert's gallery as an abstract, purified space that restricts any form of active engagement to a ritualized state of total spatial control, one that is also corroborated by contemporary press accounts.[51] Within these terms, *Le vide* cannot be reduced to the physical framework of the gallery—"a white wall"—nor to the essence of pictorial sensibility purportedly exhibited in the

space. Rather than make the "gallery as physical support . . . disappear," the spatial ambience is produced through the built context's inextricable links to an ensemble of signs, symbols, and ritual actions that Klein appropriates.[52] It is on the basis on these appropriations—from the exhibition's stately invitations to the presence of Republican Guards—that Klein's work most radically departs from Situationist spatial practice.

> Although certain artistic activities might be more notoriously mortally wounded than others, we believe that the hanging of a painting in a gallery is a relic.
> —Guy Debord, "One Step Back," *Potlatch* 28, May 1957

The Lettrist International's psychogeographic program was subsequently elaborated under the banner of "situations" with the consolidation of the Situationist International in the northern Italian town of Cosio d'Arroscia in July 1957. In his "Report on the Construction of Situations," a founding Situationist text, Debord wrote:

> We must try to construct situations, i.e., collective environments, ensembles of impressions determining the *quality of a moment*. If we take the simple example of a gathering of a group of individuals for a given time, and taking into account acquaintances and material means at our disposal, we must study which arrangement of the site, which selection of participants, and which *incitement of events suit the desired environment*. . . . The construction of situations begins on the other side of the modern collapse of the idea of theater. It is easy to see to what extent the very principle of theater—nonintervention—is attached to the alienation of the old world. Inversely, we see how the most valid of revolutionary cultural explorations have sought to break the spectator's psychological identification with the hero, so as to incite this spectator into activity by provoking his capacities to revolutionize his own life. The situation is thus made to be lived by its constructors. The role of the "public," if not passive at least a walk-on, must ever diminish, while the share of those who cannot be called actors but, in a new meaning of the term, "livers [*viveurs*]," will increase.[53]

From nonintervention to intervention, from spectatorial identification to activity, from public passivity to public "livers" (a term Klein also uses), situations were to effect a transformation of both art and life through moments

35
Installation view with model, *Caverne de l'antimatière*, Galerie René Drouin, Paris, 1959. Biblioteca d'Arte, Fondo Archivio Gallizio.

of constructive play and self-actualization. Space was not to be conceived as an "abstract container of social relations"; rather, the question was "how space could be refunctioned and appropriated as a mise en scène of a situation."[54]

Even though Debord had already broken with Klein, he had not disavowed all artistic efforts at the time of Klein's *Le vide*. Debord's personal correspondence in the months preceding Klein's opening indicate his intense involvement preparing, in collaboration with Jorn, an exhibition by their Italian colleague Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio. Heralded by Debord as a Situationist event of "exceptional importance," Pinot-Gallizio's *Caverne de l'antimatière* (Cavern of antimatter) opened at the Galerie René Drouin on May 13, 1959, one year after Klein's *Le vide*.[55] For the exhibition, Pinot-Gallizio took as his premise the atomic antimatter that makes up the universe (hence the antimatter title), although he nevertheless filled the gallery with painted matter. The ceiling, walls, and floor of the space were lined with 476 feet (145 m) of his *pittura industriale* (industrial painting), nonexpressive and mechanically produced painting he had exposed to the corrosive effects of gunpowder, sun, wind, and rain. Pinot-Gallizio described the *Caverne* as "the uterus of the world" and arranged for a model to dress in his painting and parade around the space throughout the duration of the exhibition's opening (fig. 35). In creating a cavelike environment, Pinot-Gallizio imagined the *Caverne* as a spatial and temporal retreat from modern forms of habitation, and thus in opposition to the legacy of modern architecture and its attendant disciplinary and homogenizing effects.[56] The *Caverne*'s immersive environment


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was altered by the visitors' movements, as lights, colors, perfumes, and sounds varied in intensity, thereby enacting the SI's "unitary urbanist" concern for "a milieu in dynamic relation with experiments in behavior."[57]

Within art history, however, *Le vide* is held apart from and deemed antithetical to such Situationist tactics as Pinot-Gallizio's *Caverne*. Rather, Arman's *Le plein* (Full-up, 1960) is seen as the literal response to *Le vide* and consequently serves as its primary historical comparison.[58] With *Le plein*, Arman filled Iris Clert's gallery with waste and debris that he and Martial Raysse had scavenged from Parisian trash bins. *Le plein* literalized a condition in which almost anything—from old records to tattered birdcages—could be recuperated as art. But, as Françoise Choay made clear, *Le plein* was an exhibition from which "no collector could profit."[59] Given that the three exhibitions share an architectural dimension, *Le plein* nevertheless differs from both *Le vide* and *Caverne* as it operates according to the logic of the store window: its spatial dimension was consumed visually rather than corporeally. Visitors to *Le plein* viewed the trash from either a platform inside the gallery or through its street-level window (fig. 36). *Le plein*'s vision of capitalist excess aligns exactly with the operations of spectacle, given that the store window serves to both distance and offer a contemplative mode of viewing.[60] The objects are turned into an image, mimicking spectacle's effects. *Le plein* buries history and "preserves the old culture in a congealed form."[61]

36
View from the street, *Le plein*, Galerie Iris Clert, Paris, 1960. Photo Shunk-Kender © Roy Lichtenstein Foundation.

Through Klein's refusal to exhibit painting and his courting of public participation, *Le vide* approximates the construction of a situation, while the work's ritualized unfolding remains counter to Situationist nomadic movement and behavioral disorientation as theorized in the *dérive*.[62] Even so, both *Caverne* and *Le vide* created environments that acted upon the spectator and thereby shared an insistence on the bodily dimension of the respective experiences they generated. In the former this occurred through the literal alteration of the gallery's environment in relation to the spectators' movements, whereas in the latter it operated through the inscription of spectators within a network of repressive and alienated relationships: Republican Guards bestowed on the space its "official character";[63] private guards checked invitations and restricted entry; commercial transactions were required for "impregnation"; visitor privileges were restricted to two and three minutes; and, by some accounts, Klein used a loudspeaker to direct the traffic flow.

After his experience at *Le vide*, Albert Camus sent Klein a short missive in which he stated, "Avec le vide, les pleins pouvoirs" (With the void, absolute power; fig. 37).[64] Yet Camus's pithy statement does not suggest where such power materialized in the exhibition. Indeed, the effect of "power" generated by *Le vide* derives less from *who* might posses such power and more from the way Klein appropriated the signifying forms and practices through which power

37
Note from Albert Camus to Yves Klein, 1958. Ink on printed paper, 5 1/4 × 8 1/4 in. (13.5 × 21 cm).

operates. The presence of Republican Guards served to signify and symbolically encode *Le vide* as a space presided over by the French state while simultaneously legislating visitors' behavior. In cooperation with the four additional private guards that Klein employed, visitors to *Le vide* complied with the exhibition's spatial organization, which commanded their bodies' movement (waiting in line, entering in groups of ten) and equally prescribed their gestures (showing invitations, paying for impregnation, not writing on the pristine walls).[65] The space's effectiveness—what Klein called "the intense climate that reigns terribly"—also depended on the visitors assuming and reproducing the norms implied in such rituals. Insofar as the public (or at least 40 percent of it, according to Klein) bestowed its collective recognition on the event, Klein made the implicit violence of his strategies visible through the graffitist's expulsion from the space, but also through the remaining visitors' silent, compulsory witnessing of this act. Klein went even further. He made the bodily dimension of ritual's functioning explicit by infiltrating—literally and materially—the visitors' bodies, because the cocktails they were so innocently served made them urinate blue.

Klein's production of a space of "immaterial pictorial sensibility" revealed the violence exercised by his strategies: the visitors' tacit compliance, the violence when the behavioral codes were breached, and literal impregnation. Rather than disguise the performativity of the space or the attendant social conventions through which *Le vide* was produced, this "painter of space" gave space—as a specific form of symbols, operations, and interactions—the character of an event. *Le vide* was *not* a performance in space in the way that "performance" is often used to describe the role of actors over objects, and "performative" is used as an adjective to describe this condition. The specificity of *Le vide* derives from the way that public rituals produce real effects, and "power" is less the power seemingly delegated only to the artist (as Camus seems to suggest) than power as an effect of a set of practices, from commercial transactions to the presence

of Republican Guards, that regulated the experience of space in *Le vide* and the subjects it produced.

Klein's appropriations suggest a co-optation of the state's conventions that might work to reformulate them by diverting both their meaning and their effect. The presence of Republican Guards requires and implies the presence of a state representative, although none attended *Le vide*. Similarly, Klein's blue stamp on the invitation envelope was postmarked, albeit illegally, by the central post office. But Klein's appropriations do not challenge the legitimacy of these forms and practices, even as he cleaves them from their legitimate institutional context. As with the catalog conventions deployed in *Yves Peintures*, here, too, Klein takes as a given that such signs are neither neutral nor natural but operate to produce real effects. The specificity of Klein's appropriations rests on the fact that they are deployed as a means by which to generate an experience of what he called "immaterial pictorial sensibility" rather than to test or challenge conventionality per se. Even so, a tension ensues between the hyperbolic performative activation of the space and the "immediacy" that such means were supposed to put into effect.

For Klein it was essential that the reality and experience of immaterial pictorial sensibility not depend on his words alone—or his sovereign choice. Hence, again, his departure from Duchamp's nominalist legacy, because Klein's appropriations of a discursive performativity shift attention from the art *object* to the *experience* that social and institutional conventions might engender. With Klein, conventions (including by then avant-gardist scandal) effectively bring into being the reality of the propositional content he puts forth. In so doing, Klein also reveals and mines the "absence" at the origin of such discursive acts. With *Le vide* Klein grafts a set of ritual forms and practices that govern the presence of the state onto his presentation of immaterial painting. And he does so in the absence of each.

The state, or its representatives, were not explicitly involved in *Le vide*'s production, and the nonattendance of ministers suggests the absence of any grounding reality or referent that justified the guards' presence. Similarly, only the gallery context guaranteed that there was any "painting" or aesthetic "ambience" to be experienced. These absences are crucial and drive one to the crux of Klein's performative realism: the discursive practices that regulate painting and the state continue to function and produce effects even in the absence of their material reality or referent; it follows that *Le vide* has no ontological or mystical status apart from the discursive acts that constituted it as a real event. In *Le vide*, the presence of both painting and the state is an effect of how signs—from Republican Guards to the art gallery context—successfully collaborate with social conventions that take effect in a determinate sociohistorical context and are recognized as such by the public. In the case of Klein's immaterial painting, reviews were written and immaterial paintings

sold. (Klein explains, "Incredible as it may seem, I have actually sold a number of these pictorial immaterial states.")[66] In the case of the state, its signifying forms helped produce the sought-after ritual and made immaterial pictorial sensibility take effect; after all, the space had been officially "recognized." Yet with the shift from object to experience, from painting to the social and institutional relations that subtend it and that it subtends, Klein also revealed the exclusions by which such a seemingly unified space of pictorial sensibility and a nation proceed, an operation overtly thematized in his revolutionary speech (I return to this speech in more detail below).

Power is difficult to locate except when it is exercised, and Klein exercised power in *Le vide* through his command to expel a visitor from the space, an act that unequivocally proved the opposite of the immediacy Klein otherwise declared. What is more, the real powers of the state did materialize at *Le vide*: firefighters arrived, as did the police, who ultimately asked that the exhibition be closed and evacuated the large crowd that had gathered in the street (around 2,000, according to Clert). The next day Clert (who had already been censured by the postal ministry for postmarking false stamps) was summoned to Republican Guard headquarters to explain the guards' presence at the opening. The two attending guards reported that they thought the exhibition had "mocked the Republic."[67] But here, in the presence of the state's power, the specter of modern art's autonomy returned to safeguard both Klein and Clert, as it was on the basis of this autonomy that they were kept at a safe distance from the realm of legal convention and conviction.

> Can saying make it so?
> —J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 1962
>
> Confusion is the opportunity for contradicting oneself!
> —Yves Klein, 1961

The grafting of the discursive performativity of painting and the state in *Le vide* also pertained to (in more properly linguistic terms) Klein's "discours révolutionnaire," which was delivered the evening of *Le vide*'s opening at 1:00 A.M. at La Coupole, a local artists' hangout. There is scant evidence as to whether Klein delivered the complete revolutionary speech on said occasion, or if anyone other than Tinguely actually listened.[68] Iris Clert, for example, makes no mention of the speech in her account of *Le vide*.[69] Even so, Klein did reproduce it as part of *Le vide*'s events in *Le dépassement*, and in so doing inscribed his work with additional historical significance: just two weeks after *Le vide*'s opening and in the wake of the Fourth Republic's failures, a coup d'état was staged by French

settlers in Algiers on May 13. The ensuing confusion and state of emergency prompted Charles de Gaulle's declaration on May 15 that he was ready to assume power, ultimately accepting his investiture as president on June 1, 1958.

Klein's speech begins with a conventional address—"Ladies, Gentlemen"—in which he announces that his auditors have attended "an historical moment in the history of universal art." His message, which, he explains, he "carries in himself," is one of "life and nature." Klein describes two paths: one of darkness, and one of glory and sacrifice to the community. Then, quoting Socrates, he explains: "'I think that when one speaks of something one should speak *in good faith*.'"[70] Klein thus rhetorically establishes the fact that whatever he says, he is both endowed with a message and speaking in good faith.

In what follows Klein declares, "The justification of my work resides in the universal and motivated projection of its pictorial essence." Pictorial "essence" is then tethered to his desire to "give France an immediate and radiant vision."[71] But it is the speech's final section that reveals the historical practices and contingency upon which such a radiant vision depends, when he remarks, "The provisionary government of rehabilitation will be a chivalrous order in which artists, clergy [*religieux*], and scientists will give back a suitable color to France, blue or white, even amaranth, and will eradicate the miasmas of a horrible green, red, and gray France, a leprous France. The government will again clothe its soldiers in the richly colored uniforms of Napoleon III."[72]

From the perspective of progressive democratic politics, Klein's so-called revolutionary speech is rife with paradox. He proclaims that the new France will be not a democratic order of the people but a chivalric one, with social supremacy granted to a new class trilogy: artists, clergy, and scientists. Moreover, if "color as convention" previously served as a means by which Klein secured the "truth" of his painting, here color is deployed for its symbolic capacity to evoke the nation's *trois couleurs*, even as Klein subverts this convention by naming a variant of red, *amarante*, not *rouge*.[73] To be sure, Klein describes a modern nation state (France) dressed in imperial clothes (Napoleon III).

Klein's "universal projection" of "pictorial essence" is explicitly aligned in the course of his speech with an imperial political imaginary. He continues, "Our pure and scandalous government will eliminate the sly, the Françoise Sagans, the tricksters, the Genets, the George Duhamels, the Einsteins, the Roosevelts, the Pandit Nehrus, the rats and the trash cans, etc., etc."[74] Klein declares the need for purifying the French nation by eliminating various social subjects and filth—from a proto-feminist writer to leading playwrights, a pioneering scientist, a U.S. president, the prime minister of an independent India, rats, and trash. Klein's insistence on universality over plurality, health over sickness, and thus identity over difference creates the effect of a nationalist discourse and conjures attendant representations of a nation's symbolic body and its "imagined community"—

one that found actual contemporary expression in France's official (imperial) nationalism during the French-Algerian War.[75]

Historically the French colonial empire had governed and subjugated cultural and racial others through "absorption" or "integration"[76] to its *mission civilisatrice,* but the particular operation revealed in Klein's speech, as with *Le vide,* is ultimately that of violent expulsion.[77] In inverse proportion to Klein's declarations, during the French-Algerian War official French nationalism—or that which was publicly declared—assimilated difference into identity, most flagrantly through the claim that *l'Algerie c'est la France.* Yet in practice the colonial powers completely othered the colonial subject through repressive measures extending from the institution of a state of emergency to the granting of special powers in Algeria (ultimately extended to France) and to curfews and torture. In contrast, Klein's plans for a provisionary government to found a "pure" French nation proceed by the "scandalous" eliminations he *openly* declares.

Histories of nationalism and nationalist identity describe its process of subject formation according to the appeal to a common language that serves to suppress regional divisions and ethnic particularities so as to give rise to national consciousness. As such, the homogenizing pressure of technologies such as print media, radio, and later TV also facilitate nationalism, even as the latter remains tethered to an idea of community as organically rooted in a territory.[78] Klein further demonstrates that such a conception of a homogenous nation depends not only on a common language. As Klein's speech concludes, "Let this be said and done" (*Que ce soit dit et fait*).[79] Here Klein dramatizes the transitivity of performative language: it does what it says and will do what it says to the ones addressed and excluded from the nation it constructs. In this way, Klein's founding act of nationalism and his avowed eliminations make visible the violence at the origin of such discursive acts, a violence that serves to establish a government's efficacy and legitimacy. By describing his government as at once "pure" and "scandalous," Klein confesses a nationalist violence, even as he refrains from literally referencing the contemporary context of a French empire on the wane at a moment just prior to de Gaulle's return to power.[80]

If delivered at La Coupole, Klein's speech would have resonated as both political and farcical, thereby engaging a central paradox regarding performative language: Can speech acts "do" what they "say" and also be "joking"?[81] But to ask whether Klein's speech was pronounced, as he claims, "in good faith" or whether he was joking is, given the alleged brasserie context, perhaps to pose the wrong question. Performative language—be it signatures, proper names, or the conventions of artistic and political institutions—is a discourse that seeks to produce sought-after effects. Moreover, it is a discursive modality that is structured by an irreducible fiction: power is issued forth, but it is a power that at its origin is retroactively legitimated.

Klein's speech mimics the founding declaration of a nation.[82] And what is decisive in this context is that the propositional content of such founding performatives do not correspond to the world; instead, as with the ensemble of signs and practices that brought pictorial sensibility into being at *Le vide*, they aim to create that world in their attempt to at once represent and govern a nation.[83] Within these terms, Klein's realist specificity derives less from his fidelity to sociohistorical reference—be it to his own paintings purportedly dating to 1950 or to contemporary political events—than from his activation of a process by which language and institutional conventions produce effects and thereby *appear* referential.

Klein's work is governed by a fundamental transformation and displacement of a traditional understanding of referential signification: a shift from questions of direct reference and description to a statement's ability to produce or transform a situation, to have an effect. Herein lies Klein's difference from Hains and Villeglé's *affiches lacérées*, which explore the possibility of a counterspeech as materialized on the tattered fields of posters, but also his work's difference from the ideational versions of North American Conceptual art (even though he shares its penchant for publicity). Klein's immaterial work is not an idea or conception that exists prior to and independent of its execution. Klein's work depends on how a reality can be produced through conventions that signify in historically specific ways and on how verbal signs that name are indissolubly linked to social acts both within and outside the specificity of art's discursive field. The former speaks directly to the fictive and ex post facto aspects of so much of Klein's work: from its dubious origins in *Yves Peintures* to the retroactive pricing of identical monochromes; from the annexing of Republican Guards in the absence of the state's representatives to crafting a revolutionary speech so that it resonate historically even when more than likely no one listened.[84]

Klein's work mines the specious grounds on which performative language is disguised as referential reality, but at each and every turn the means by which he produces "immaterial pictorial sensibility" proves the opposite of what he declares.[85] In *Le vide* and his attendant revolutionary speech Klein opens the realm of the performative to the violence that it normally keeps from view, thereby locating the performative in art within a broader cultural horizon that informs his complex response to specific historical and political instability in France at this time. But where Klein does not explicitly reference the French-Algerian War—or what was often referred to as "une guerre sans nom"[86]—in the wake of *Le vide* and de Gaulle's return to power, this contemporary context will increasingly become the concern of Klein's colleagues, Raymond Hains and Jacques Villeglé. It is to their work on the nature of performative language and discourse that I will now turn.

55 Jacques Garal, "Ultra-borborygmes, sculpture détonante, peinture au 6,35: La TV vous présente l'avant-garde," *Télé 7 jours*, no. 57 (April 22, 1961): 22–23.

56 Restany wrote the introductory text for the original *Topographie anécdotée du hasard* (An anecdoted topography of chance) and also wrote a review of the attendant exhibition. See Pierre Restany, "Daniel Spoerri," *Cimaise*, no. 58 (1962): 92.

57 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 143.

58 Michèle Cone, "The Late Fifties in Europe: A Conversation with Pierre Restany," *Arts Magazine*, no. 64 (1990): 69.

59 Pierre Restany, "Yves Klein," *Planète*, no. 6 (1962).

Chapter 2. Let This Be Said and Done

1 See also the discussion in Yve-Alain Bois, "Klein's Relevance for Today," *October*, no. 119 (Winter 2007): 75–93.

2 See the discussions in Nan Rosenthal, "Assisted Levitation," in *Yves Klein, 1928–1962: A Retrospective*, ed. Institute for the Arts, Rice University (Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1982), 91–100; and Sidra Stich, *Yves Klein* (Ostfildern, Germany: Cantz Verlag, 1994), 42–47.

3 *Yves Peintures* was printed alongside another near-identical edition titled *Haguenault Peintures*. In this case, the name "Haguenault" replaces "Yves" and is printed in both the title and captions. The latter include an additional credit line—as in "Haguenault—Paris, 1951 (162 × 97) Collection Raymond Hains"—suggesting the purchase of the work for a private collection.

4 Yves Klein, "Texte de présentation de l'exposition *Yves Peinture* aux Editions Lacoste, 15 octobre 1955," in Klein, *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art et autres écrits*, ed. Marie-Anne Sichère and Didier Semin, Ecrits d'Artistes (Paris: Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 2003), 40–41.

5 See Carol C. Mancusi-Ungaro, "A Technical Note on IKB," in Institute for the Arts, Rice University, *Yves Klein, 1928–1962*, 258–59.

6 See Klein's "L'aventure monochrome," in Klein, *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 235–36.

7 See Yves Klein, "Esquisse de scénario," in ibid.

8 The secondary status of color has an extended history beyond the scope of the present study. Yet as a specific case, one might consider, for example, the aesthetic manual *Grammaire des arts du dessin* (1867), in which Charles Blanc argues that painters must control coloristic effects lest the viewer fall from the conceptual certainties of the Idea—as embodied in line—to the vicissitudes of color's sensuousness and the perceptually contingent. See Charles Blanc, *Grammaire des arts du dessin*, trans. Kate Newell Doggett (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1874). For a comprehensive account of the historicity of the discourse on color, see David Bachelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion, 2000).

9 Yves Klein, "My Position in the Battle between Line and Color," in *Zero* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1973), 10–11. (Originally published in English in the first issue of the German art journal *Zero* in April 1958.)

10 Ibid.

11 Klein, *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 81.

12 Writing about Klein's 1956 show at the Galerie Colette Allendy, one critic explains that what struck him about the exhibition "was precisely the ensemble of paintings integrated within the architecture." François Molnar, "Yves," *Cimaise*, no. 5 (1956): 25.

13 Klein, *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 233.

14 Parallel to color's historical stigmatization in aesthetic discourse, it becomes an object of scientific inquiry and is domesticated in the natural sciences; namely, color was circumscribed by the mandates of an empirical conceptuality otherwise known as color theory. See, for example, Michel Eugène Chevreul, *De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs et de l'assortiment des objets colorés* (Paris: Pitois-Levrault, 1839).

15 Klein, *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 233 (emphasis added). Nan Rosenthal suggests that Klein developed the idea for the different prices "in the course of or after" the Milan exhibition. See Rosenthal, "Assisted Levitation," 108.

16 Klein privileges color's "immaterial" status and effects as a way to work against an empiricism that believes too much in the objectivity of visual perception, even as Klein, speaking to color's mutability and hence irreducibility to the registers of representation both visual and verbal (his "pictorial states"), repeatedly offers up color "readymade." One might say that Klein, like Duchamp, is a painter in the "nominalist sense." But Klein takes up the readymade in relation to the history of *color* in painting. For a discussion of Duchamp's pictorial nominalism, see Thierry de Duve, "The Readymade and the Tube of Paint," in *Kant after Duchamp* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

17 Klein, *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 233.

18 Klein, "My Position" (emphasis added).

19 See Roger de Piles, *Dialogue sur le coloris* (Paris: N. Langlois, 1673).

20 My discussion of color as convention is indebted to a conversation with Carol Armstrong, December 12, 2006.

21 To the best of my knowledge, two films precede the production of *Yves Klein, propositions monochromes*. One is *Scènes de judo* (1953), and the other, from 1956–57, includes shots from Klein's studio and his variously colored monochromes. All films are described based on their restoration in 1999 by the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, and included in their Yves Klein Archives Cinématographique. See the filmography published in Camille Morineau, ed., *Yves Klein: Corps, couleur, immatériel* (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 2006), 310.

22 I am using the American designation of "second floor" for the original French "premier étage."

23 This observation is indebted to Denys Riout. See Riout, *Yves Klein: Manifester l'immatériel* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2004), 38. Riout's insightful study was recently translated into English as *Yves Klein: Expressing the Immaterial*, trans. Chrisoula Petridis (Paris: Editions Dilecta, 2010).

24 Michel Tapié, "Mathieu Paints a Picture," *Art News* 53, no. 10 (February 1955): 50–53. Mathieu formed part of the same photo-essay series in which Hans Namuth's photographs of Jackson Pollock appeared. First published in *Art News* in 1951, the Pollock photographs, due to their special blur effect, give

the impression of movement within the fixed image and visually affirm the presence of Pollock in his work. Mathieu elaborates Pollock's reception not so much in terms of the radicality of Pollock's technique (dripping and pouring paint over a horizontal canvas) and the incorporation of new materials (including car and house paint, dirt, and cigarette butts) but instead departs from the photographic condition of Pollock's reception as image. For an account of Mathieu's showmanship and his reception by American Abstract Expressionist painters, see Molly Warnock, "Acting the Part," *Artforum* 49, no. 10 (Summer 2011): 352–55.

25 See the July 18, 1850, entry in Eugène Delacroix, *The Journal of Eugène Delacroix*, trans. Lucy Norton (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1955).

26 Yves Klein, "Chelsea Hotel Manifesto," in *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 295. (Originally written in English with the assistance of Neil Levine and John Archambault).

27 *Hurlements* was not only an attack on the iconic properties of film but also on the particular viewing relations the cinematic context enforces, thus shifting the terms of film's analysis from a consideration of the medium's ontology (as with André Bazin) to a critique of the institutionalization of the cinematic viewing experience.

28 For a history of the SI, see Jean-François Martos, *Histoire de l'internationale situationniste* (Paris: Editions Ivrea, 1995).

29 The well-rehearsed opposition between the SI and Nouveau Réalisme is due in no small part to the latter group's discursive framing by Pierre Restany—who evacuated all political significance and ambivalence from the work in question—but also to Debord's concurrent condemnation of its members in the pages of the *Internationale situationniste*. For other studies that juxtapose the reception and work of Klein and Debord, see Juli Carson, "Dematerialisms: The Non-dialectics of Yves Klein," in *Yves Klein: Air Architecture* (Los Angeles: MAK Center for Art and Architecture; Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004); and Sylvère Lotringer, "Traveling through the Void," in *Yves Klein: Air Architecture*, 116–24, 125–34.

30 In 1985 Guy Debord wrote, "The painter Yves Klein, whom I knew at the time of *Hurlements* and who attended the first, very tumultuous showing of this film, was dazzled by a convincing 24-minute sequence of darkness, and must have derived from that, some years later, his 'monochrome' paintings which—enveloped in a bit of zen mysticism during his famous 'blue period'—made many an expert cry genius." Klein did indeed attend the first screening of *Hurlements* at the Ciné-club d'Avant-Garde 52 on June 30, 1952, but he would not have seen the final sequence. Due to the "tumultuous" response that Debord evoked, the film-club management stopped the screening, and it was first shown in full four months later at the Ciné-club du Quartier Latin's Salle des Sociétés Savantes. Thus Debord's assertion that *Hurlements*' final sequence served as Klein's inspiration for his monochromes is misleading. This said, Debord continued, "When it comes to painting, it is not I who could possibly obscure the glory of Yves Klein. That is, rather, what Malévitch had done 40 years before." See Guy Debord, *Considerations on the Assassination of Gérard Lebovici*, trans. Robert Greene (Los Angeles: Tam Tam Books, 2001), 30–31. Regardless of whether Klein saw *Hurlements*' final sequence, he would have understood the film's basic structure as well as its negation of visual representation.

31 Ralph Rumney to Guy Debord, postcard, January 14, 1957, Yves Klein Archives, Paris. Debord did not attend or exhibit his work in Brussels, while Klein arrived (although this is not confirmed) on the occasion of his *Conférence monosonore*, scheduled for Wednesday, February 6, 1957. Yet, according to a letter from Guy Debord to Piero Simondo, "Klein did not go to Brussels on account of I don't know what hindrance." Whether Debord is here referring to the Taptoë opening or to Klein's scheduled *monosonore* event (or both) is uncertain. Guy Debord to Piero Simondo, March 11, 1957, Gérard Berréby Archive, Paris. Regarding Debord's nonparticipation in the Taptoë exhibition, Jorn wrote to Debord and Michèle Bernstein, suggesting that their failure to show up was an act of sabotage and rupture. Debord's handwritten comments in the margin of Jorn's typed letter respond to the charge by explaining that they did not see him at the train station. Asger Jorn to Guy Debord and Michèle Bernstein, February 2, 1957, Fonds Guy Debord, Département des Manuscrits, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

32 Thanks are due to Gérard Berréby for the identification of this painting's four collaborators. Please note that the artists' identification represents a revision to the account first presented in my "Yves Klein en France: Un paradoxe spatial," in Morineau, *Yves Klein*, 175.

33 Debord to Simondo, March 11, 1957, Gérard Berréby Archive.

34 Guy Debord and Asger Jorn are misidentified (as Pierre Restany and Raymond Hains) in this photograph in Institute for the Arts, Rice University, *Yves Klein, 1928–1962: A Retrospective* (Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University; New York: Arts Publisher, 1982), 303.

35 These ideas were first elaborated in Guy Debord, "Introduction à une critique de la géographie urbaine," *Les lèvres nues*, no. 6 (1955). For the English translation, see Guy Debord, "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography," in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), 5–8. Psychogeographic practice was facilitated by the production of psychogeographic maps. See Tom McDonough, "Situationist Space," in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 241–65.

36 Max Heindel, *Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception or Mystic Christianity: An Elementary Treatise upon Man's Past Evolution, Present Constitution and Future Development* (Oceanside, CA: Fellowship Press, 1920), 247.

37 See Thomas McEvilley, "Yves Klein and Rosicrucianism," in Institute for the Arts, Rice University, *Yves Klein, 1928–1962*, 238–54.

38 Michèle Bernstein confirms that the visit to Klein's studio mentioned above ended in Debord's definitive break with Klein. This was primarily due, according to Bernstein, to Klein's avowed spiritual beliefs and his membership in the Knights of the Order of the Archers of Saint Sebastian. Michèle Bernstein, conversation with author, March 14, 2006. For additional accounts of the historical relation between Klein and the SI, please see Christophe Bourseiller, *Vie et mort de Guy Debord* (Paris: Plon, 1999), 70–71, 147–51; and Roberto Ohrt, *Phantom Avantgarde: Eine Geschichte der Situationistischen*

Internationale und der modernen Kunst (Hamburg: Nautilus, 1990), 154–58.

39 I follow Klein's description as presented in his book *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art* (La Louvière, Belgium: Editions Montbliart, 1959) and reproduced in Klein, *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 80–117. Klein's account of *Le vide* differs in some details from Iris Clert's recollections in Iris Clert, *Iris-Time (L'Artventure)* (Paris: Editions Denoël, 2003).

40 Klein, *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 90.

41 A similar stamp had been used for the invitation to Klein's concurrent exhibitions at the Galerie Iris Clert and the Galerie Colette Allendy in 1957.

42 Klein, *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 86. Based on conversion and exchange rates provided by the Banque de France, Klein's proposed entrance fee of 1,500 francs equals $3.87 at that time, or, closer to the present, $34 in 2009.

43 "Vernissage d'un mur blanc," *Le Figaro*, April 30, 1958.

44 André Arnaud, "Interview pour Europe 1," in *Yves Klein* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1983), 197.

45 Klein, *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 85 (emphasis added).

46 See also Nuit Banai, "*Rayonnement* and the Readymade: Yves Klein and the End of Painting," *RES*, no. 51 (Spring 2007): 202–15.

47 As reproduced in Klein, *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 91–92 (emphasis added). In French, Klein's command to the guards reads as: "Saisissez cet homme et jetez-le dehors avec violence." The recent English translation of Klein's description omits the final "avec violence," translating the directive as: "Seize this man and throw him out!" See *Overcoming the Problematics of Art: The Writings of Yves Klein*, trans. Klaus Ottmann (Putnam, CT: Spring, 2007), 54.

48 See the editor's comments in *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 344–45.

49 As reproduced in ibid., 92–93 (emphasis added).

50 Nan Rosenthal analyzes Klein's use of the "historical present tense" in "Assisted Levitation," 118.

51 See "Vernissage d'un mur blanc."

52 Tom McDonough reads *Le vide* as a work "sensitized" by the artist's mere presence, thereby presenting "the spectacle of the artist himself." See Tom McDonough, *"The Beautiful Language of My Century": Reinventing the Language of Contestation in Postwar France, 1945–1968* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 130–31.

53 Guy Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations," in McDonough, *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, 46–47 (emphasis added).

54 Tom Levin, "Geopolitics of Hibernation: The Drift of Situationist Urbanism," in *Situationists: Art, Politics, Urbanism*, ed. Xavier Costa and Libero Andreotti (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona and ACTAR, 1996), 120.

55 See the letter to Pinot-Gallizio, February 16, 1957, reproduced in Guy Debord, *Guy Debord Correspondance*, vol. 1, *Juin 1957–août 1960* (France: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1999). See also the letter to Pinot-Gallizio dated January 30, 1958, in which Debord describes all of the different tasks that need to be attended to in the construction of the *Caverne*.

56 See Frances Stracey, "The Caves of Gallizio and Hirschhorn: Excavations of the Present," *October*, no. 116 (Spring 2006): 87–100.

57 Costa and Andreotti, *Situationists*, 30. A "téréminophone," a machine invented by Walter Omo, emitted sounds at differing wavelengths adjusted to the visitor's location in the space. See Mirella Bandini, *L'esthetique, le politique de Cobra a l'Internationale Situationniste*, trans. Claude Galli (Marseille: Editions Sulliver and Via Valeriano, 1998), 108. See also Nicola Pezolet, "The Cavern of Antimatter: Giuseppe 'Pinot' Gallizio and the Technological Imaginary of the Early Situationist International," *Grey Room*, no. 38 (Winter 2010): esp. 78–85.

58 See, for example, Buchloh, "Plenty or Nothing," 257–83. At the time, Georges Boudaille made reference to Klein's *Le vide* in his review of the *Caverne*. See Georges Boudaille, "Caverne de l'anti-matière," *Cimaise*, no. 5 (1959): 49. Subsequently, writing on account of Spur (a German group associated with the SI) for the *Deutsche Zeitung*, John Anthony Thwaites charges that Klein's "'government of sensibility' is not as far as they [the Situationists] think from 'situationist culture.'" The article is reproduced in the *Internationale situationniste*, no. 5 (December 1960): 15.

59 Françoise Choay, "Lettre de Paris II: 'Culture du débris' à la Galerie Iris Clert," *Art International* 4, no. 9 (1960): 36.

60 Jill Carrick offers an alternative reading of Arman's Accumulations. She turns to the objects' outmoded quality and reads them through the lens of Hal Foster's "traumatic realism." See Carrick, *Nouveau Réalisme, 1960s France, and the Neo-avant-garde: Topographies of Chance and Return* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 77–95.

61 Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 136.

62 Guy Debord, "Théorie de la dérive," *Internationale situationniste*, no. 2 (December 1958).

63 Klein, *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 87.

64 Reproduced in Denys Riout, *Yves Klein: Manifester l'immatériel* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2004), 8.

65 Contrary to Klein's description, Iris Clert explains that the visitors entered two by two. See Clert, *Iris-Time*, 165.

66 See Klein, "Chelsea Hotel Manifesto," 87.

67 See Clert, *Iris-Time*, 162, 168.

68 In a letter to Pontus Hultén, Tinguely describes Klein's speech as "hilarious." Jean Tinguely to Pontus Hultén, reproduced in K. G. Pontus Hultén, *Jean Tinguely—Méta*, trans. Mary Whittall (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975), 62.

69 See Clert, *Iris-Time*, 159–72. Jacques Villeglé also does not recall any speech. Interview with author, February 28, 2006.

70 As reproduced in Klein, *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 96 (emphasis added).

71 Ibid., 96, 97.

72 Ibid.

73 White is also the color of the French monarchy and blue the color of Paris.

74 Klein, *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 97.

75 This term is taken from Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991).

76 See the discussion in James D. Le Sueur, *Uncivil War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics during the Decolonization of Algeria*, 2d ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 22–28.

77 Klein's speech thematically interlaces a discourse on spatial purification with that of social purification, a discursive redoubling that was common currency in French collaborationist discourse concerning Jews—to whom the racialist slur "rats" was often applied. Klein's invocation of rats also conjures its baby *raton*, which beginning around 1954 became a prevalent racialist slur for Algerians. Such a redoubling of spatial purification and social purification had its afterlife in postwar urban planning and the continued designation of Paris neighborhoods (primarily immigrant and working class) as *îlots insalubres* (unhealthy blocks). See Yankel Fijalkow, *La construction des îlots insalubres, Paris, 1850–1945* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998). By extension *ratonnade* connotes the physical violence enacted against those of another nationality, in particular the brutality of the French against the Maghrébins. In addition to suggesting such racializing interpellations, Klein's speech is both homophobic and misogynist. It is these reactionary associations that might have fueled Debord's claim—eight months later—that Klein was at the head of "a fascist wave making progress in France." Guy Debord, "L'absence et ses habilleurs," *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 2 (December 1958): 7.

78 See chapter 3, "The Origins of National Consciousness," in Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

79 Klein, *Le dépassement de la problématique de l'art*, 97.

80 Such violence was made public two months earlier with the publication of Henri Alleg's *La Question*, an account of a Frenchman's torture by the French military. At the time it had the distinction of being the first book banned in France since the eighteenth century. Given that it was the first such document written by a Frenchman, *La Question* served in large measure to turn public opinion against the war and made French citizens confront, as Alleg put it, "what is done In Their Name." Henri Alleg, *La Question* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1958).

81 According to Austin, "Surely the words must be spoken 'seriously' and so as to be taken 'seriously'? This is, though vague, true enough in general—it is an important commonplace in discussing the purport of any utterance whatsoever. I must not be joking, for example, nor writing a poem." See J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 9. Nan Rosenthal addresses Klein's humor and wit as it informs his work's conspicuous acts of fraudulence. See Nan Rosenthal, "Comic Relief," in *Artforum* 33, no. 10 (Summer 1995): 93–97, 130.

82 Klein's speech recalls Derrida's discussion of the "fabulous" or fictional quality of founding performatives. Just as the "signature invents the signer," so do declarations rely on a "fabulous event, by this fable which implies the structure of the trace and is only in truth possible thanks to the inadequation to itself of a present, a signature gives itself a name." By extension, a declaration gives itself a nation. Jacques Derrida, "Declarations of Independence," *New Political Science*, no. 15 (1986): 10.

83 As Derrida makes clear regarding founding performatives, "the whole game... tends to present performative utterances *as* constative utterances." Ibid., 11. Hence also the tautological basis of founding performatives: Klein's justifies the authority of his projected government on the basis of the authority he is in the process of declaring. Derrida's understanding of declarations counters (not surprisingly) that of John Searle, who maintains: "It is the defining characteristic of this class [declarations] that the successful performance of one of its members brings about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality, successful performance guarantees that the propositional content corresponds to the world." John Searle, "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," *Language in Society*, no. 5 (1976): 13.

84 It is precisely due to Klein's flagrant recourse to fictive (or, following Derrida, "fabulous") referents that, I argue, his work remains relevant today. In my afterword, I return to this subject as well as to the afterlife of Nouveau Réalisme.

85 Klein's work enacts what might be called, pace Derrida, a *performative contradiction:* his discursive acts prove the opposite of the immediacy he declares. Or, in Austin's terms, what he *does* is the opposite of what he *says*.

86 See Berstein, "Une guerre sans nom," in *La France en guerre d'Algérie, November 1954–Juillet 1962*, ed. Laurent Gervereau, Jean-Pierre Rioux, and Benjamin Stora (Paris: Musée d'Histoire Contemporaine—BDIC, 1992).

Chapter 3. Archeological Abductions

1 For more information on the censorship of the Manifeste des 121 and the second manifesto, see Jean-François Sirinelli, "Les intellectuels français dans la bataille," in *La France en guerre d'Algérie, November 1954–Juillet 1962*, ed. Laurent Gervereau, Jean-Pierre Rioux, and Benjamin Stora (Paris: Musée d'Histoire Contemporaine—BDIC, 1992).

2 Signed by 185 intellectuals, the second manifesto maintained that the French army was accomplishing its task as defined by France's "mission civilisatrice, sociale, et humaine." See ibid., 112.

3 The artists' lack of intervention in the final work's composition is in part a conceit, but it is hard to know to what extent it is so given that (to the best of my knowledge) there are no official statements on record for the period of the 1950s and '60s. Nevertheless, the artists explicitly framed their work so as to suggest the minimum involvement on their part, reduced, as it were, to the act of cutting out the posters from their public spaces of presentation and subsequently adhering them to a canvas. See Villeglé's discussion of what he terms "manifestation spontanée" in Jacques Villeglé, *Urbi et Orbi* (Mâcon, France: Editions W, 1986), 94. This book, a compilation of Villeglé's essays, was recently republished and expanded as Jacques Villeglé, *La traversée Urbi et Orbi* (Paris: Luna-Park Transédition, 2005). In the 1980s, Villeglé described what he calls "the little assistance to enhance artistic value" ("le coup de pouce pour une mise en valeur plastique"). In so doing, he puts forth the idea of "assisted" *décollage*, thereby recalling Duchamp's "assisted" readymades. See Jacques Villeglé, "Décollage/Décollage assisté," (1987), reproduced in *Jacques Villeglé: La comédie urbaine* (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 2008), 279.

4 Raymond Hains, "Quand la photographie devient l'objet," *Photo Almanach Prisma*, no. 5 (1952).