

Press Release

## JULIO LE PARC

25 November - 15 February 2015

(Closed 24, 25, 26, 31 December and 1 January)

Serpentine Sackler Gallery



*All my work invites viewers to feel free to interact, with their own personality, their own vision and their own feelings, not imposed by me. The ideal spectator is the most free, most open, least conditioned. The most important thing for me is that brief moment of interconnection.*

Julio Le Parc, 2014

This winter, the Serpentine Sackler Gallery presents the first major exhibition in the UK by Argentinian-born artist Julio Le Parc (1928, lives in France), who is known for creating artworks that dynamically animate and transform space through light. Featuring seminal installations and interactive works from the early 1960s to the present day, Le Parc's playful and mesmerising exhibition transforms the Gallery and actively involves visitors.

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London W2 3XA

**Serpentine Sackler Gallery**

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Le Parc began to make geometrical abstract paintings in 1959 based on pre-determined systems, first in black and white, then in colour. In the early 1960s he began working in three dimensions, incorporating moving, projected and reflected lights. From 1964 onwards he began producing works based on distorting mirrors and the displacement of the spectator by means of labyrinths and play rooms.

He is known for using projected, moving, and reflected light to create works of art in constant flux. At the heart of his practice is a desire to experiment with our engagement and perception of art, thereby altering our perspective on the roles of the artist, spectator and the institution. Through his experimentation with light, Le Parc creates a situation of visual instability, in the work and in the viewer's experience.

He was a founding member of the activist Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV), which is an acronym and a play on the French word for 'serious'. The group confronted the establishment through organised, shared experiences and by releasing manifestos that raised awareness on the role of art within society. While defending the rights of visual artists, Le Parc was briefly expelled from Paris following the social unrest of 1968. A series of previously unseen political drawings, alongside unseen sketches of portraits and geometric shapes, forms part of this exhibition. These drawings are presented within the artist's book that accompanies the show alongside a fictional interview, imagined by film-maker and novelist Edgardo Cozarinsky, between Le Parc and the late Italian artist Lucio Fontana who was his teacher from 1943 to 1946 at the Beaux-Arts in Paris.

The exhibition at the Serpentine Sackler Gallery highlights the different dimensions in Le Parc's works, from his politicised drawings and interactive works to his iconic light installations. Experimentation with light as well as the physical involvement and visual stimulation of the spectator have been crucial throughout Le Parc's career. At the Serpentine Sackler Gallery, the visitor's participation is both passive and active, with the exhibition design reminiscent of an amusement arcade and its numerous booths. While Le Parc's light installations offer an immersive experience, his interactive 'game' works become a place for activity. Born out of his political activism, the 'games' include unstable, moving floors as well as punch bags and cut-out target silhouettes upon which are depicted familiar political archetypes, such as a dictator, a politician, a pacifist, a policeman and a museum director. The Limited Edition produced on the occasion of his exhibition is a silkscreen print of the target image from the interactive installation *Choisissez vos Ennemis* (1970) from his *Jeux Enquête* series, which is included in the show.

Le Parc held his first solo exhibition at the Howard Wise Gallery, New York (1966), with more recent solo exhibitions at the Daros Foundation, Buenos Aires, (2014) and the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2013) that were widely positively received to critical and positive acclaim, the latter having broken visitor number records. His work has been the subject of numerous retrospective exhibitions in major museums in Havana, Düsseldorf, Montevideo, Caracas, Asunción, Mexico City, Stockholm, Berlin, Madrid, Barcelona, Santiago de Chile and Porto Alegre.

This exhibition is part of the Serpentine Winter Programme, which includes an exhibition by German artist Reiner Ruthenbeck that runs concurrently at the Serpentine Gallery.

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Press images at [serpentinegalleries.org/press](http://serpentinegalleries.org/press)

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Serpentine Sackler Gallery, West Carriage Drive, Kensington Gardens, London W2 2AR, United Kingdom

**Image credit:**

Julio Le Parc

*Sol Instable*, 1964/2005

Image Courtesy: CAV – Centro des Artes Visuales, Instituto di Tella, Buenos Aires

**Notes to Editors:**

Julio Le Parc was born in Mendoza, Argentina in 1928 and currently lives and works in Paris where he has resided since the late 1950s. In 1964 he was awarded the Special Prize (acquisition) in the Premio Internacional Torcuato Di Tella, Buenos Aires, Argentina, and in 1966, the International Painting Grand Prix at the XXXIII Venice *Biennale*, Italy. Following his expulsion from Paris in 1968, he travelled around various European countries only to return five months later when the restriction was revoked. Le Parc participated in *Unofficial Latin America*, held in Paris, and the Medellín Biennial in Colombia in 1970. Le Parc's first solo exhibition was held at the Howard Wise Gallery, New York (1966), which was followed by his first retrospective exhibition, held at the Instituto Di Tella in Buenos Aires, Argentina (1967). Subsequently Le Parc has had numerous retrospective exhibitions in major museums in Havana, Düsseldorf, Montevideo, Caracas, Asunción, Mexico City, Stockholm, Berlin, Madrid, Barcelona, Santiago de Chile, and Porto Alegre. His most recent solo exhibitions were held at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (2013), Casa Daros in Rio de Janeiro (2014) and the Museu de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (2014). Notable writings include: *A propósito de arte espectáculo.. (With regard to spectacle art..)*; *Función social del arte en la sociedad contemporánea (The social function of art in contemporary society)*; *Color 1959 (Colour 1959)*; and *El artista en el context social actual (The artist in the present social context)*. He participated, with the Denuncia group, in the collective work *Torture* (1972) and joined the International Brigade of Antifascist Painters (1975).

Julio Le Parc supported by

**artEDU**  
STIFTUNG



**ZUMTOBEL**

Julio Le Parc Exhibition Circle

Geyze Diniz

Frances Reynolds

Erica Roberts

Galeria Nara Roesler

With additional support from

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Serpentine Galleries supported by



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**ENGLAND**  
LOTTERY FUNDED

## Julio Le Parc

Serpentine Sackler Gallery  
Exhibition List of Works

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### SOUTH GALLERY



*4 doubles miroirs, 1966*

#### **[4 double mirrors]**

Wood, plastic

Courtesy of the artist



*Douze lunettes pour une vision autre, 1965*

#### **[12 glasses for another vision]**

Plastic, metal, glass, prisms, vinyl

Courtesy of the artist



*Ensemble de Jeux avec Balles de Ping-Pong, 1965*

#### **[Set of Ping-Pong Games]**

Wood, Plexiglas, balls, paint, motorised device

Courtesy of the artist



*Continuel Mobile*, 1963/2014

**[Continuous Mobile]**

Stainless steel

Courtesy of the artist



*Boules à vibrer*, 1964

**[Balls to vibrate]**

Wood, cork, string

Courtesy of the artist



*Boules sur ressorts*, 1963 – 1965

**[Balls on springs]**

Wood, cork, string, paint

Courtesy of the artist



*Trame à Manipuler*, 1965

**[Spinning Wheel to Manipulate]**

Wood, metal, cardboard, silkscreen

Courtesy of the artist

## WEST GALLERY



*Sol Instable avec Lumière Pulsante, 1964*

**[Unstable Floor with Pulsating Light]**

Wood, balloon

Courtesy of the artist



*Image Projetée, 1962*

**[Projected Image]**

Wood, metal, light

Courtesy of the artist



*Cercle Projeté, 1968*

**[Projected Cercle]**

Wood, metal, light

Courtesy of the artist



*Lampe Projetée, 1966*

**[Projected Light]**

Wood, metal, light

Courtesy of the artist



*Lumière sur Ressort*, 1964

**[Light on Springs]**

Wood, metal, light

Courtesy of the artist



*Continuel Lumière Mobile*, 1960 – 1966

**[Continuous Light Mobile]**

Wood, metal, light

Courtesy of the artist



*Lumière en Mouvement*, 1962 – 2014

**[Light in Movement]**

Installation with light and panel

Courtesy of the artist

## NORTH GALLERY

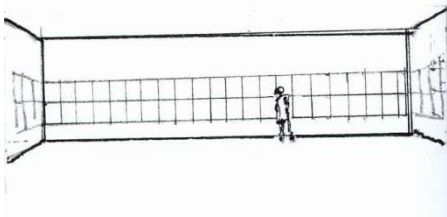


*Image en Vibration: Autoportrait, 1981*

### **[Vibrating Image: Autoportrait]**

Wood, metal, light

Courtesy of the artist



*Dibujos al telefono, o no*

### **[Drawings over the phone, or not]**

56 Works on paper

Courtesy of the artist

## EAST GALLERY



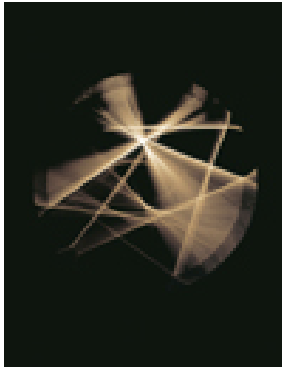
*Lumière Verticale Visualisée, 1978*

### **[Visualised Vertical Light]**

Installation with light

Courtesy of the artist





*Continuel Lumière Cylindre*, 1962 – 2012

**[Continuous Light Cylinder]**

Wood, metal, light

Courtesy of the artist



*Lumières Alternées*, 1993

**[Alternating Lights]**

Wood, metal, light

Courtesy of the artist



*Continuel Lumière*, 1962-1996

**[Continuous Light]**

Plastic, wood

Courtesy of the artist



*Miroir en Vibration*, 1965

**[Vibrating Mirror]**

Wood, metal, motorised device

Courtesy of the artist



*Onze Mouvements Surprises*, 1965

**[Eleven Surprising Movements]**

Wood, Plexiglas, paint

Courtesy of the artist

**SOUTH POWDER ROOM**



*Jeu Enquête: Frappez les Gradés*, 1971

**[Inquiry Game: Strike the Officers]**

18 Punching bags

Courtesy of the artist



*Sièges à Ressort*, 1965

**[Seat on Springs]**

Wood, steel, string

Courtesy of the artist



*Jeu Enquête: Choisissez vos Ennemis*, 1970

**[Inquiry Game: Choose your Enemies]**

Silkscreen, plastic

Courtesy of the artist



*Jeu Enquête: Les Mythes, 1969*

**[Inquiry Game: Knock Down the Myths]**

Wood, motorised device

Courtesy of the artist

**NORTH POWDER ROOM**



*Reconstruction d'une Cellule de Labyrinthe de 1963, 1963 - 2014*

**[Reconstruction of a Labyrinth Cell from 1963]**

Plastic, light, wood

Courtesy of the artist



*Continuel Lumière avec Formes en Contorsions, 1966-1996*

**[Continuous Light with Forms in Contortion]**

Wood, metal, light

Courtesy of the artist



*Continuel Lumière au Plafond, 1963-1996*

**[Continuous Light on the Ceiling]**

Wood, stainless steel, lights

Courtesy of the artist

## DIRECTORS' INTRODUCTION

Julio Le Parc (born in Argentina in 1928, lives in France) is known for using projected, moving and reflected light to create works of art in constant flux. At the heart of his practice is a desire to experiment with our engagement and perception of art, thereby altering our perspective on the roles of the artist, the spectator and the institution. Through his experimentation with light, Le Parc creates a situation of visual instability, in the work and in the viewer's experience. These immersive and interactive installations are often activated by the viewer's participation – shifting the focus of his work from the hand of the artist to the spectator.

Le Parc's first experiments with light date back to 1959 and highlight a development in his practice from kinetic object-based works to moving-light installations. These, now regarded as his most iconic works, stem from his continued investigation into the public's engagement with art and the uses of exhibition spaces. This series of works bring forth different forms of engagement through a variety of optical illusions while using the same medium: light. Light that reflects, that is projected, or that is in movement emphasises the endless possibilities of perception offered by a common medium.

The physical involvement and visual stimulation of the visitor has been crucial throughout Le Parc's career. While in Paris in the 1960s, he co-founded GRAV (Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel – the acronym being a play on the French word for 'serious') with Horacio Garcia Rossi, Lélia Mordoch, François Morellet, Anne Passeron, Francisco Sobrino, Joël Stein and Jean-Pierre Yvaral. The artists focused on confronting the establishment through organised, shared experiences, and released manifestos that spoke out for the importance of art within society. The group is known for *Journée dans*

*la Rue (Day on the Street, 1966)* which took place in prominent public spaces in Paris. The artists created a route comprised of eight different interactive works throughout the city, from Place du Châtelet, Place de l'Opéra, Champs-Élysées, to Jardin des Tuileries, Montparnasse, and Saint-Germain-des-Prés.

The civil unrest in France culminated in the events of May 1968. It was a time of protests, strikes, conflict and near revolution, which ultimately led to social and political reform. Le Parc was exiled from France for five months because of his artistic activism. During this turbulent period, he made satirical political drawings as a means to comment on the situation in France. These drawings are exhibited for the first time within the Serpentine's exhibition, alongside unseen sketches including portraits and geometric shapes. By bringing these politicised drawings in parallel with Le Parc's better-known light installations, the similarities between these works are made apparent – both concerned with the need to investigate and question the relationship between art and socio-political matters.

The artist's work remains as pertinent as it was in the 1960s, and its key issues, relating to government, the role of the visitor, the artist and the power of the arts organisation, are still significant and discussed today. The exhibition at the Serpentine Sackler Gallery, Le Parc's first major solo show in the UK, aims to highlight this relevance. Showcasing his seminal light installations and playful kinetic object-based works, the exhibition allows the public to discover, or rediscover, his experiential, playful and visionary work. Visitor participation can be both passive and active, with the numerous booths of the exhibition design reminiscent of an arcade. Le Parc's light installations command the perimeter spaces of the Gallery, offering an immersive

experience, while his interactive game works are exhibited in the central Powder Rooms. Within these 'playrooms' are games typically found within a fair: punching bags and cut-out target silhouettes. Contrasting with their playful nature are the images they bear of well-known social archetypes: a dictator, a politician, a pacifist, a policeman, a museum director. These works form part of Le Parc's *Jeu Enquête* series, borne from the events of May 1968.

The drawings presented within the exhibition form the content of this publication, along with a poem by Le Parc. Written for the book and originally in Spanish, *Mano, no me olvides (Hand, Don't Forget Me)* reflects the idea of 'freehand drawings' presented within the publication. The poem is also a reference to the role that artists may play in social engagement. Writer and filmmaker Edgardo Cozarinsky contributes to the publication with a fictional interview between Le Parc and the late Italian painter and sculptor Lucio Fontana. Between 1943 and 1946 Fontana was Le Parc's professor at the Académie des Beaux-Arts and the text links their practices, references art movements that influenced them and situates Le Parc's work in a wider historical context.

We are very grateful to Le Parc for his tireless energy and commitment to the exhibition, this artist's book and the remarkable Limited Edition produced to coincide with the exhibition. We would also like to thank Le Parc's son, Yamil Le Parc, for his work and dedication in helping the Serpentine team. We extend our gratitude to Juan Gashu and Santiago Martirena from AINOKO for their assistance in preparing the artworks for the Gallery.

We are indebted to artEDU Stiftung and Zumtobel for their support of Le Parc's exhibition at the Serpentine Sackler Gallery. The exhibition would also not have been

possible without the Julio Le Parc Exhibition Circle: Geyze Diniz, Frances Reynolds, Erica Roberts and Galeria Nara Roesler. We are also grateful to the Embassy of Argentina, London, and Trapiche. Arts Council England makes an essential contribution towards all of the Serpentine's work, for which we are hugely grateful.

The Council of the Serpentine is an extraordinary group that provides ongoing and important assistance to the Galleries. The continued success of the Serpentine is due in large part to the Council, as well as to our Patrons, Future Contemporaries, and Benefactors.

Finally, we are indebted to the Serpentine team: Jochen Volz, Head of Programmes; Amira Gad, Exhibition Curator; Emma Enderby, Assistant Curator; Mike Gaughan, Gallery Manager and Joel Bunn, Installation & Production Manager, who have worked closely with the wider Serpentine Galleries staff to realise this exhibition and we are most grateful to them.

Julia Peyton-Jones  
Director, Serpentine Galleries  
and Co-Director, Exhibitions  
and Programmes

Hans Ulrich Obrist  
Co-Director, Exhibitions  
and Programmes and Director  
of International Projects

# Imaginary Dialogue Between Two Artists

Imagined By Edgardo Cozarinsky



**Le Parc (eyes closed)**  
At different times in the day, the sun tears blinding reflections from the snowy peak of Tupungato. You look at it from far away, standing next to the Cacique Gaymallén canal; depending on the season, you can follow the spectrum of lights on the snow or ice on top of the mountain. For even if the sun seems motionless, the snow it illumines seems to vibrate. And if you move around, if you change your observation point, new reflections can assail you.

*(He opens his eyes)*

At school we learned that Guaymallén was not the name of an Indian chief, but that the conquistadors had heard the original inhabitants, in their language, call the territory *guay mallén*: land of marshes, ponds, stagnant water. Centuries later the region was drained for vine cultivation and olive-tree planting. The name lingered for the canal that carries water from the Mendoza River. It's also become the name for the county and its capital.

**Fontana (eyes closed)**  
A *camalote* passes over the waters of the Paraná... Roots, vines, branches, a few dead plants, others still alive, a water vole struggling amongst them, a snake slipping through this drifting island made of a tangle of scraps and substances in varying states of survival or decomposition, barely solid, just enough to allow a puma sometimes to stand on its unstable surface, mistrustfully looking at the landscape flowing by on both sides.

*(He opens his eyes)*

They told us that a little further on, the island was just temporary. Soon it would be broken up, drowned, reduced to muddy stuff carried away by the current. It would give to the waters of the wide Rio de La Plata an opacity, an earth colour. At the time, Brazilians called it *rio da merda*.

*(They laugh)*

**Le Parc**  
Your childhood in Rosario, on the banks of the Paraná, was more spectacular than mine at the foot of the Andes.

**Fontana**  
You think? Spectacular... maybe. But your observation of the changing lights definitely endowed you with subtler perception.



### **Le Parc**

Let's be careful. We shouldn't give in to psychological or biographical temptation. What matters is that light is ungraspable. You can only invite it, wait for it, try to keep it, play with it, always knowing you'll never be able to tame it, that it just visits us for a few instants.

### **Fontana**

That's true. Canvas, bronze, marble, sandstone, even neon, which I experimented with at the beginning, are nothing at all faced with the cosmos, the infinite space that repeats itself. The material can be anything: I had that intuition very early on. Sometimes, it's there to signal what is not: a presence to signify an absence.

### **Le Parc**

Already in the 30s, when you were making sculpture, you worked with geometric objects and others whose undulating contours suggested magnified cells, ceramics whose shapes, though recognisable, were subjected to an explicit violence: they bore the outline of your hand, especially your thumb on the clay. And this was many years before the lacerated or pierced canvases. *I tuoi tagli, I tuoi buchi...*<sup>1</sup>

### **Fontana**

I think later on, among changing shapes and various materials, you pursued the same research, but focused, for you, on light. I was probably seeking to transmit an energy beyond static matter. What matters, today, just as it did fifty years ago, when you started GRAV,<sup>2</sup> is to obliterate any stubborn complacency confronting the work of art and the notion of a unique artist, the myth of creation. To engage the spectator in a process, to make him an accomplice of the work.

### **Le Parc**

You're right: I didn't want spectators, I wanted interlocutors. I said to myself: I'm in the same space as he, subject to the same pressures. I think you were already looking for that in the late 40s, in Buenos Aires, when you wanted to take scientific discoveries or hypotheses into account. You asked artists to go beyond the third dimension to join the fourth, the dimension of time. And when you returned to Italy, you couldn't care less about the ephemeral quality of some of your "spatial" works. During retrospectives they had to be reproduced with the help of documents.

### **Fontana**

What's more ephemeral than light? It has no consumer value, it escapes all merchandising as well as contact with the human hand.

### **Le Parc**

And yet we can't escape the institution ... You won the Grand Prize for Painting at the Biennale in 1966, a year before my Grand Prize.

### **Fontana**

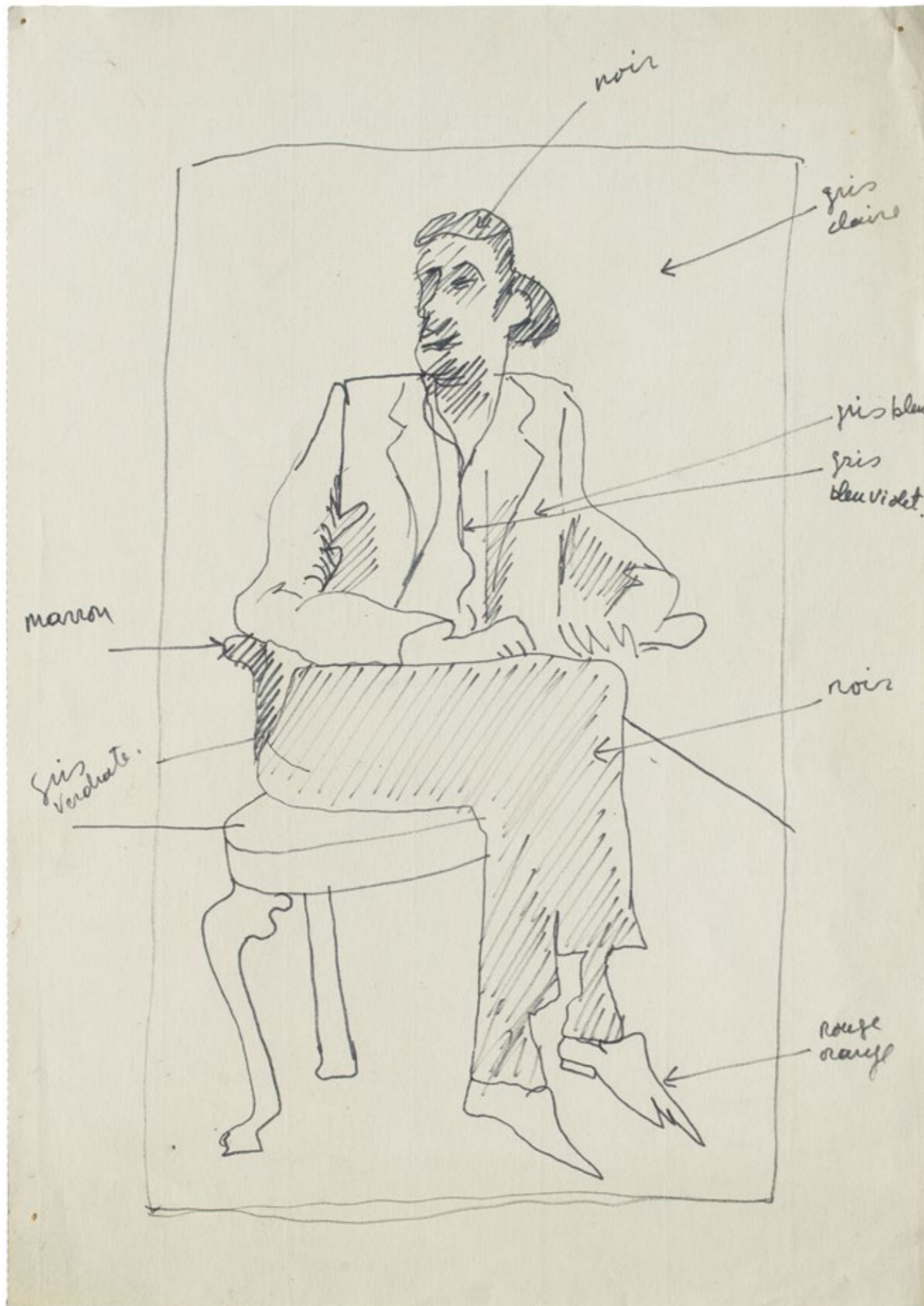
But you, you clever half-breed, you got yourself thrown out of France the next year for espousing the protest movements of May 68. Give honour where honour is due ...

*(Le Parc laughs. Fontana follows suit. Little by little their voices fade, become distant, as if carried away by a wind that is not of this world.)*

Translated from French by  
Charlotte Mandell

<sup>1</sup> "Your cuts, your holes..."

<sup>2</sup> Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel.



**Hand...  
don't forget me**

**a poem by Julio Le Parc  
written in Carboneras, August, 2014**

A tingling  
without me realising  
it drew on my thigh  
mind on something else  
my gaze towards the hill  
and  
my hand by itself  
synthesising the hill's profile

There it is with its self-declared  
autonomy

From the gaze  
to the brain  
from the brain  
to the hand

None of this that time  
and  
others  
and others with more nuanced  
relations:

Gaze – brain – hand – pencil –  
paper  
or  
hand that gazes – brain that  
concedes  
or  
brain that allows gazing – hand  
that is pleased  
or  
ants on fingers – brain that  
forgets  
or  
gaze inwards – sharpened pencil  
or  
hand that imitates the silent –

surprise in the gaze	or	or	not hide it
or	feigned surprise – freed	paths – behind the darkness	or
the hand's caprice – aside	spontaneity	or	the hand turned over – its
reflection	or	let it sound – the other sense's	whirlwind
or	consented authenticity –	window	or
your hand I saw – defeated will	uncertain trace	or	obliged gazing – present
or	or	the good hand – the hand	desiring
the silent eye's complicity –	searches for conclusion - it is	unforeseen	or
brain that admits	other the diversion	or	the hand again –recreation
or	or	the eraser – the pencil that	gained
from where to come – it must be	the exact drawing – the blurred	erases	or
done	forgetting	or	the gaze – concealed acolyte
or	or	what is left – what I almost reach	or
inventing traces – it's getting	a slow practice – freed illusion	or	unnecessary reflection – mind at
close	or	all of it – unnecessary	peace
or	all the lines – some lines	comprehension	or
the backdrop – the hand	or	or	more hand – will reencountered
or	simple rest – consented	the double hidden – the escape/	or
resume the forgotten – from the	sharpness	elopement... that draws nearer	drawing
old: new	or	or	drawing?
or	eyes half-open – pencil gripped	the hand, still – the rest	
caught without knowing – saved	or	afterwards	why name it
by the escape	imposed objective – the hand's	or	
or	taunt	braking for what – the unlevelled	it has its path
squared – uncertain borders	or	walking	
or	pretension – unnecessary guess	or	its name is the unexpected
a turn around the hand – another	or	they might be four – there is no	what will stop by will be
level	Additions of lines – forgotten	beginning	it remains without knowing
or	obligations	or	it increases at the same level
an abandonment – new canes	or	they might be eight – there is no	
or	walk through what's done – lucky	end	why degrees, stars, medals...
unsteady gait – doors that open	encounters	or	
or	or	hand open – eyes closed	the drawing
scribble – unsigned drawing	forgotten hand – surprise at the	or	the drawing?
or	side	it came without arriving – it	the drawing that is not drawing
application – forgetting	or	stayed going back	
or	without knowing – having	or	Did it mean it?
round turns – aspiring point	desired it	not pretentious – the haze did	did it demand light?



the shadow of the boxes  
the small breathing spaces  
the fidelity with time  
not even humility  
just being  
it doesn't wait  
its own has gone  
it stayed there  
unexpected  
surprising  
having arrived without knowing  
having been an intermediary  
it suffered escapes  
impregnation  
not even: unfinished labour

To see itself  
let itself be seen  
a layer of time  
it being of being with or without  
little pieces stayed in them

I saw them return  
they are part of my gait, walk...  
and if the unseen is seen?  
and if what is not is seen?  
and if what it is only he knows?  
and why know it?

He gave of his own and off he  
went  
mixed himself in that mixture

He sailed without sailing  
it made me sail  
the unnecessary ports  
helped the travelled routes

Small pillars, indispensable  
pillars  
rhythm to breathing  
present air not forgotten

Drawing – gaze – brain – hand  
in the time he passes  
in time what he fixes  
it is not a sum but it adds up  
the small is made large with the  
small ones

Its song, with that of everyone  
little song  
the first for me

The drawing  
what it saw  
what it synthesised  
what it could visualise  
the desired quintessence

Scribbles for more scribbles

Perhaps a walkway  
was hidden in it: a seed?  
its unstable living  
it was  
it almost was  
it intended to be  
it did not want to be

I am coming, she said somewhat  
quietly, and left  
her voice was added

It would have been a small  
cantata

Its relation to others: unordered  
a guiding thread yes

Hand, free  
hand, required  
hand, exact  
hand, forgotten  
hand, mad  
hand that invents  
hand half-gazed at  
hand directed from above  
hand that comes back  
hand that corrects  
hand that redoes  
hand that retreats  
hand, discreet  
hand that lets  
hand in its own business  
hand that does not compete  
hand, independent-obedient  
hand with its privileged  
connection  
hand that caresses  
hand, respected  
hand that sees sometimes  
before the eye  
hand that brings

Hand  
hand  
I give you my hand hand

For you hand  
gaining the drawing

there they went  
there they were  
there they waited

yes  
there  
here  
before  
today  
tomorrow  
yes  
I love them

Translated from Spanish  
by Paul Merchant