

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS - BRUXELLES

SARKIS

Au commencement le blanc

9 January - 1st March 2014

18, rue du Bourg-Tibourg - 75004 Paris



SARKIS, STUDIO VIEW OF D'APRÈS SATANTANGO DE BÉLA TARR, 2013 - WHITE OIL-BASED PAINT ON PHOTOGRAPHY WITH RICE, NEON, AND TRANSFORMER, 144 X 236 CM

The Galerie Nathalie Obadia is very pleased to present *Au commencement le blanc* by Sarkis, its third collaboration with the artist following *Opus 2* in 2011 and *Aura d'après Vaudou* in 2012.

Au commencement le blanc brings together a large selection of works on the theme of white, which have either never been shown or are from an earlier period. In a precise and accurate manner, Sarkis has treated the gallery as though he were a musical composer. By arranging his works like sounds, whose formal intonation he has fine-tuned through their positioning and the participation of the observer, Sarkis has created a score of great expression.

The tone of the exhibition and the welcome offered to the visitor is given by the aphonic cry of Sarkis's reinterpretation of Edvard Munch's *Scream*. The four accomplished wall sculptures in neon and copper define the four primary sound tempos with the intensity of their light: *D'après Satantango de Béla Tarr* (2013), *Scène en cuivre avec néons* (2012), *La colonne vertébrale du Retable d'Isenheim de Grünewald* (2012) and *À la limite de 120 cm* (2012).

As an accompaniment to this arrangement, the artist has thrown in a few harmonies at random intervals: his *Ikones* offer a cadenced rhythm to possible interpretations, two works on the floor – *After Ice Age* (2013) and *L'Attente* (1969) – provide a counterpoint to the mural works, a previously unseen series of drawings with the title *Uruchi* is inspired by *Kintsugi*, the Japanese technique of ceramic repair, the experience of which he prolongs using torn paper, white fingerprints on coloured glass reveal the delicate touch of the artist and his glazier master, and the video *Blanc sur noir jour et nuit* (2007) makes light of the physical properties of watercolour in a bowl of water, while Sarkis reflects on the creative possibilities offered by the medium.

For *After Ice Age* (2013), Sarkis has arranged fifty oils on paper in a metal cabinet rather like a filing case for prints. As in the series *Aura d'après Vaudou*, in which he allowed the oil of the paint to act freely outside the motif bounded by the brush, here he has taken inspiration from prehistoric objects that were exhibited in *Ice Age Art, Arrival of the Modern Mind at the British Museum* in 2012. In *D'Après Satantango de Béla Tarr*, some of his *Ikones*, and a selection of works on paper – *R1, R2, R3, R8, R10* and *R11*, in which he has carefully worked the titanium white or zinc white in the same way he would plough earth in furrows as preparation before planting – he husked grains of rice, a completely new material in his work, onto the pure matter.

By inviting observers to touch the coloured glass, to consult the drawings in the metal cabinet and to manipulate curtains made from ancient silk, Sarkis offers us the tactile and bodily sensations involved in the interaction with his works. With his restriction on unproductive gestures and a rigorous choice of strongly evocative materials – neon, gold, oil, brick, paper, silk, copper and feather – Sarkis offers a remarkable orchestration of discernment and plastic intelligence. And it is in a similarly constrained manner that *Au commencement le blanc* proposes a contemporary digression to the visitor, without Sarkis's works ever losing control of their power.

Born in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1938, Sarkis lives and works in Paris.

Born in Istanbul in 1938, Sarkis studied French, painting and interior design before moving to Paris in 1964. In 1967 he won the painting prize at the Biennale de Paris and presented his work *Connaissez-vous Joseph Beuys ?* at the Salon de Mai, in a reference to the man he considered the most important artist of the day. In 1969 he was invited by the critic and curator Harald Szeemann to take part in the now legendary show *When Attitudes Become Form*. Teaching and the sharing of experience are key concerns of this artist. From 1980 to 1990 he was director of the Art Department at the École des Arts Décoratifs in Strasbourg, and from 1988 to 1995 he ran a seminar at the Institut des Hautes Etudes en Arts Plastiques created by Pontus Hulten. Since the 1980s, Sarkis has taken part in numerous international exhibitions (including Documenta and the biennials in Venice, Sydney, Istanbul and Moscow) and had his work shown in the world's leading museums. In the exhibition *Passages* at the Pompidou Centre in 2010, works by Sarkis were allowed to dialogue with works by Kasimir Malevich, the wall from André Breton's studio, and *Plight* by Joseph Beuys, who is one of Sarkis's sources of inspiration, along with the Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, one of whose films he explored in the Brancusi studio. *Passages* evoked both the permanent back-and-forth between an artist's studio and the museum, and Walter Benjamin's great unfinished work about the arcades of Paris. The exhibition featured a series of recent or specially created works produced by the Pompidou Centre. These works, standing as the artist's KRIEGSSCHATZ (trophies), comprised found objects, art works and ethnographic objects from different civilizations.

In 2011 the Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain in Geneva (MAMCO) devoted an important retrospective to the artist entitled *Hôtel Sarkis*. The presentation on four floors brought together 200 works created between 1971 and 2011, and explored the artist's different practices (video and sound installations, watercolours, photographs, films) and thus amplified the resonance of a body of work produced in response to other artists, whether musicians, architects, writers, philosophers, painters, sculptors or filmmakers.

In 2012, Sarkis presented *Ballads* in the 5000 square metres of the underwater Hangars, at the invitation of the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen and the Port of Rotterdam, as well as *Ailleurs, Ici* on the estate of Chaumont-sur-Loire, following a commission by the regional council of Centre. He has also taken part in the group show *La Triennale – Intense Proximité* at the Palais de Tokyo with his *Frise des Trésors de Guerre*, showed at *Néon, who's afraid of red, yellow and blue?* at La Maison Rouge – Fondation Antoine de Galbert, and *Istanbul Modern* at the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen. In 2013, Sarkis took part in the exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form, Bern 1969/Venice 2013* at the Prada Foundation as part of the 55th Venice Biennale. He also showed at *Passages Croisés en or* at the Château d'Angers, and was invited to present his *Frise de Guerre* at the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) in Tasmania as part of the exhibition *The Red Queen*. Sarkis also participated in the exhibition *Ici, Ailleurs* as part of the Marseille – Provence, European Capital of Culture programme, and the exhibition *Modernity? Perspectives from France and Turkey* at the Istanbul Modern, and in his solo exhibition titled *Sarkis – Cage/Ryoanji Interpretation* at the ARTER – Space for Art in Istanbul.

In 2014 he will exhibit his *Ring Portraits* at the Huis Marseille Museum voor Fotografie in Amsterdam, and will be presented in three places: the CIAC, the MNAC and the Museum of the Romanian Peasant in Bucharest. A solo exhibition will be devoted to his work at the Musée du Château des Ducs de Wurtemberg in Montbéliard beginning in spring 2014.

**Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Bourg-Tibourg**

Sarkis
Au commencement le blanc
9 January-1st March 2014
Opening on 9 January

Fabrice Hyber
Interdit aux enfants
14 March-13 May 2014
Opening on 14 March

Xu Zhen by Madeln Company
24 May-25 July 2014
Opening on 24 May

**Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Cloître Saint-Merri**

Agnès Varda
Triptyques Atypiques
8 February- 5 April 2014
Opening on 8 February

Manuel Ocampo
April-May 2014

Laure Prouvost
September-October 2014

Luc Delahaye
November-December 2014

**Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Bruxelles**

Eugène Leroy
Peintures et Fusains
8 January-8 March 2014
Opening on 8 January

Andres Serrano
13 March-17 April 2014
Opening on 13 March

Valérie Belin
22 April-21 June 2014
Opening on 22 April

Sophie Kujiken
26 June - 26 July
Opening on 26 June

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