

**Judit Reigl: Late Paintings and Drawings**

The Merchant House is proud to present Judit Reigl (1923, French, born in Hungary), a visionary figure of contemporary abstraction, a key contributor to its post-conceptual rebirth and unfolding. Installed in dialogue with Reigl, her first show in Amsterdam explores her late five-canvas monumental series *Déroulement (phase IV–anthropomorphie)* 2008 and the last of *Oiseaux* 2012, with 15 vertical scrolls of flying birds.

Reigl’s keen erudition and unorthodox outlook—from a non-Western (off-center) starting point—ground her concept of physical movement, from migration to inner mobility, to ward off stasis and conformism. Bravely parting with the Surrealist group in 1954, just as André Breton had invited her to show and had written about her work, she was forging her own style in her transformative *Éclatement* I Outburst series of the same year. As she continued to reign over *l’écriture automatique* and lyrical brushwork by a full-bodied action over a sixty-year career, fragments of canon, classical and new, have been rigorously deployed in the painterly space she opened.

Reigl’s deep connection to science and music is implicit in the unifying field of her critically acclaimed series: *Guano, Centre de dominance, Écriture en masse, Homme, Écritures d’après musique,* and *Déroulement*. These series were the focus of the five-gallery event in Paris last spring punctuating the evolution of Reigl’s explosive gestural act in relation to the expressive tension she kept discovering in the earthly matter—*la matière même*—of the canvas.

In the works at The Merchant House, Reigl reconnects to her ravishing bodies in flight from *Face à...* 1988-1990. She defined this life-long project in 1985: “The body: the most perfect instrument and the most tragic obstacle.” Yet, felicity of flight and mastery in these remarkable works break the tragic as the ballet of forms in motion soars through the rhapsodic greens and blues to articulate the inarticulate: vintage Reigl at her most seductive. As Georgia

O'Keeffe would stake out her artistic position (and though Reigl has strived to make herself hard to place), this is not about the best woman painter; it is about one of the best painters who brings us to now.

Reigl has received important awards, including the 1964 Guggenheim prize, and her work is in the collections of such major museums worldwide as The Met, the MOMA, and the Guggenheim in New York, the Tate Modern in London, and Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris and Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. For over fifty years, Reigl (age 93) has lived in a village near Paris.

**Exhibition:**

November 11, 2016 (in preview) – February 3, 2017

**Events:**

Vernissage: November 25, 2016

Amsterdam Art Weekend Agenda

Additional Events TBA

**Publications:**

The Merchant House exhibition catalogue

**Biography:**

Judit Reigl (French, born Kapuvár, Hungary, 1923), who studied at the Academy of Fine Arts of Budapest, is renowned for her monumental abstract paintings. After a narrow escape across the border in 1950, she immigrated from Hungary and settled in Paris. Her educational travels to Rome and around Italy were formative to her development as a young artist and grounded her artistic vision. In 1954 André Breton invited Reigl to exhibit in his gallery, *À l'étoile scellée*, and wrote about her early Surrealist-style work. Breaking with Surrealism, she moved on along her own trajectory while living and working in Marcoussis near Paris, where she established her studio with sculptor Betty Anderson in 1963. Critical acclaim, including publications and the 1964 Guggenheim and 1967

Carnegie Award, as well as solo gallery and museum exhibitions followed, initially in Paris and later internationally. These exhibitions were dedicated to the stages of Reigl's artistic research in experimental series, which include: *Éclatement* | Outburst 1955-1957; *Centre de dominance* | Center of Dominance and *Présence* | Presence 1958-1960; *Guano* 1958-1965; *Écriture en masse* | Mass Writing 1959-1965; *Expérience d'apesanteur* | Weightlessness, *Écriture d'après musique* | Writing after Music, and *Gestes* | Gestures 1965-1966; *Homme* | Man 1966-1972; *Drap/Décodage* | Drape/Decoding 1973; *Déroulement* | Unfolding 1973-1980; *Suites de Déroulement* | Unfolding Continued 1980-1985, including *L'Art de la fugue* | Art of the Fugue 1980-1982, *Volutes, Twists, Columns, Metal* 1982-1983, and *Hydrogène, photon, neutrinos* | Hydrogen, Photon, Neutrinos 1984-1985; *Entrée-Sortie* | Entrance/Exit 1986-1988; *Face à . . .* | Facing. . . 1988-1990; *Un corps au pluriel* | Body in the Plural 1990-1992; *Hors . . .* | Out . . . 1993-1999; *Un corps sans prix* | Priceless Body 1999-2001; *11 septembre 2001* | September 11, 2001 and *Ensuivant* 2001-2007; *Déroulement (phase IV–anthropomorphie)* | Unfolding Phase IV / Anthropomorphosis 2008; *Déroulement* | Unfolding (Abstract) 2010-2011; and *Oiseaux* | Birds 2012.

Reigl's work is in the collections of major museums: Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Musée de Brou among others in France; MOMA, the Guggenheim, and the Met in New York; the Tate Modern in London; the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston; the Cleveland Museum of Art; the Toledo Museum of Art and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo; Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Arts, Hungarian National Gallery, and Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest. In February 2016, the Allen Memorial Art Museum in Oberlin, Ohio, inaugurated Reigl's first museum retrospective in the USA—*Judit Reigl: Body Music*. In March 2016, five Parisian galleries rendered homage to her art in a joint exhibition. Reigl continues to live in Marcoussis, near Paris.

