

# PASCAL KERN

## *IN PRAISE OF PARADOX*

OPENING ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 FROM 6 TO 9 PM  
EXHIBITION FROM SEPTEMBER 13 TO OCTOBER 21, 2017

From Wednesday to Saturday, 2-7 pm and by appointment



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# IN PRAISE OF PARADOX

While Pascal Kern's works are all technically speaking photographs, let us not be fooled: there is much more at work here.

If we look closely at his large Cibachrome prints, with their seductive colours, we see temporary sculptural installations, settings built from natural elements (cucurbits) as well as industrial ones (found objects) that forever explode our codes for perceiving space. In the three series presented here, *Fictions colorées* [Coloured Fictions], *Sculpture* and *Nature*, Pascal Kern blurs the lines.

As Philippe Piguet says, "everything works in terms of binary oppositions: full-empty, negative-positive, front-back, surface-depth. He is always trying to bring the presence of a virtual space to the fore, building off of a reality that is as much conceptual as it is tangible."<sup>1</sup>

In fact, everything is a thinly-disguised paradox. If we are prepared to accept that Kern's intention is not to represent objects in themselves, then we must further admit that his work questions the methods of representation that are specific to the history of painting and sculpture, going from two dimensions to three, and back again. For Régis Durand, "all of this leads the viewer back and forth between fascination for the photographic image at its most refined, and the awareness that its traditional function has been displaced, requiring a new type of attention from us. What we behold is neither a celebration of, nor a lament for the world, as is so often the case with photographs. Rather Kern's work is a rich meditation on the use of forms, their fate, their delicate passage through the world"<sup>2</sup>.

Since his passing in 2007, there has been no individual exhibit dedicated to Pascal Kern in France, so it is a wonderful opportunity for the gallery to be able to host a new rereading of his work, which is exceptional in so many ways.

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<sup>1</sup> Philippe Piguet, "L'espace entre-deux", in *Pascal Kern*, Le Parvis, Tarbes et Parvis 3, Pau, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Régis Durand, "Pour une poétique des transferts", in *Pascal Kern*, C.A.P. Royan, 1994.

# PASCAL KERN : SNAPSHOTS OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ART

In hindsight, it is now possible to glimpse what was taking place in the 1980s and 90s, particularly with regard to photography. But is there such a domain unto itself? Would it not actually be better to abandon the notion and give up our perpetual attempts at definition, specificity and even identity? Those were the years of 'fine-art photography', a type of photography that, by its scope and its stated break with traditional photography, opened up a new critical space.

Of course it makes little sense to bring up those debates now; what matters more is being clear about the works in progress. Something happened then in the field of photography, but in what way was that more important than the other changes that have affected photography throughout its history? And why Pascal Kern in particular, among those who were at work in the same period? Because, in addition to its visual splendour, his work embodies with unrivalled conceptual rigour certain forms of questioning.

Formats, subjects, issues turn toward an autonomy of form. Photographic works become free of their dependence on the subject and on the conventions of representation, striving for a similar degree of autonomy as painting. At the same time, this type of autonomy is not without its problems. Painting itself has its own debts to pay to tradition, and it is misleading to assume that it enjoys a form of freedom that stems only from itself or from the demands of a few theoreticians. And what about sculpture, which to all appearances is even more subject to a series of constitutive rules? In fact, when it does free itself of them, it is famously constrained by ever-expanding definitions of what sculpture is.

At stake with regard to Pascal Kern, and perhaps more obviously so than with others, is the possibility of creating art on site and with the medium or media that one has chosen, and this in itself justifies rediscovering his work today. (The reasons for the choices go beyond the scope of this brief presentation.) One of his first works, which carries the general title *L'Usine à Bastos* [The Factory in Bastos], consists of a series of situations built around the resources of an abandoned factory, with all the fictional possibilities it offers. This collection of foundational works makes use of different approaches (in particular graphic research, prints, various technical objects) that are subjected to the deforming effects of time and the artist's own manipulation. This led to works in space, 'interventions', fruits of a form of collapse in urban space, but also to the first photographs of *Fictions colorées* [Coloured Fictions]. They are fictions because their narrative content is evident in the collections of arranged, found objects that are even more closely tied to the memory of industrial activity. Coloured because their near monochrome development is heightened by chalk and paint additions that prepare, as it were, the photographic staging. Any archeological or performative temptation gives way to a brilliant, enigmatic transformation through Cibachrome. But the artist's passage to photography as sole platform cannot be understood without recalling his initial apprenticeship in printing and engraving.

Taking this into account, we can see how Pascal Kern engages in a subtle, ever more complex game with the different conventions associated with genres such as painting and sculpture.

The works in the series *Nature* display variations on natural objects, vegetables – squash and pumpkins in particular – and a slice of a fallen tree trunk. These objects are rarely shown by themselves; they are part of diptychs and triptychs for the point is not to make portraits of them, or to capture them in the full glory of their condition as autonomous objects, but in their qualified form, as agents. And it is for this same reason that they are often cut in two – not to expose their insides, but to show what actions become possible: casting, counter-casting, the slow absorption of pigments by the mould.

He takes another step in that direction with his series of *Sculptures* which features the actual tools used in casting. Here Kern magnificently explores a poetics of sculpture as a complex state, part industry, part craft; the tools are certainly specialised objects, but they are also fundamental enigmas of processes. In them the artists sees an opportunity to connect with the time and memory of objects, to dig into their own history and their emptiness – to examine possible states of surfaces, while still trying to find his footing in the world.

Régis Durand  
Art Critic

# IN PRAISE OF PARADOX

## SELECTION OF WORKS



Pascal Kern

*Nature*, 1990

Triptych, Cibachrome prints, framed with wood, made by the artist

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Pascal Kern

*Sculpture*, 1992

Diptych, Cibachrome prints mounted on aluminium, framed with wood, made by the artist

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Pascal Kern

*Sculpture*, 1994

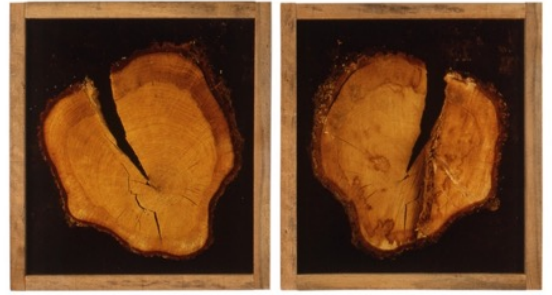
Diptych, Cibachrome prints, framed with wood, made by the artist

Pascal Kern

*Nature*, 2000

Diptych, Cibachrome prints, framed with wood, made by the artist

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Pascal Kern

*Sculpture*, 1993

Diptych, Cibachrome prints mounted on aluminium, framed with wood, made by the artist

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Pascal Kern

*Nature*, 1990

Triptych, Cibachrome prints, framed with wood, made by the artist





Pascal Kern

*Nature*, 1990

Triptych, Cibachrome prints mounted on aluminum,  
framed with wood, made by the artist

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Pascal Kern

*Fiction Colorée*, 1987

Cibachrome print mounted on board, framed with metal,  
made by the artist

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Pascal Kern

*Fiction Colorée*, 1983

Cibachrome print mounted on aluminum, framed with  
metal, made by the artist





Pascal Kern

*Nature*, 1990

Triptych, Cibachrome prints, framed with wood, made by the artist

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Pascal Kern

*Sculpture*, 1988

Diptych, Cibachrome prints mounted on aluminium, framed with wood, made by the artist

*Collection FRAC Normandie*

# PASCAL KERN

## SOLO SHOWS

### 2005

*Sculpture – Culture – Nature*, Galerie Lucien Schweitzer, Luxembourg

### 2004

*Sculpture - Culture – Nature*, HackelBury Fine Art, Londres

### 2003

*Sculpture – Culture – Nature*, Galerie Lucien Schweitzer, Luxembourg

### 2002

*Nature – Culture –Sculpture*, HackelBury Fine Art, Londres

### 2001

*Nature – Culture –Sculpture*, L'Imagerie, Lannion

*Travaux*, Maison Espagnole, Festival Contrebande, Révin

### 2000

Galerie Municipale, Vitry-sur-Seine

### 1999

HackelBury Fine Art, Londres

### 1998

*Sculpture*, Galerie Zabriskie, Paris

*Sculpture*, La Fraternelle, Maison du Peuple Saint-Claude

*Sculpture*, FRAC Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand

*Sculpture et autres avatars*, Halle au charbon du haut fourneau, Dommartin le Franc, Haute-Marne

*Sculpture*, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lons le Saunier

### 1997

*Quelques travaux 1983/96*, La Fraternelle, Maison du Peuple, Saint-Claude

### 1996

*Travaux 1988/95*, Espace Peires, Toulon

*Les avatars*, Galerie Zabriskie, Paris

*Les avatars et autres travaux*, 9<sup>e</sup> Photofolies, anciennes casernes Burloup, Rodez

### 1994

*Sculpture – Culture – Nature*, Centre d'Arts Plastiques, Royan

*Sculpture*, Galerie Zabriskie, Paris

### 1993

*Sculpture*, Galerie Zabriskie, Paris

*Sculpture – Culture – Nature*, Printemps de la Photographie, Cahors

### 1992

*Sculpture - Culture – Nature*, Les Parvis, Tarbes et Parvis 3, Pau

### 1991

*Sculpture*, Chapelle du Méjan, Arles

*Sculpture*, Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, Francfort

*Culture – Nature*, Galerie Zabriskie, Paris

*Sculpture – Culture – Nature*, Centre National de la Photographie, Palais de Tokyo, Paris

### 1990

*Sculpture*, Galerie Zabriskie, New York

### 1989

*Icônes & Sculptures*, Centre d'Arts Plastiques, Villefranche / Saône

### 1988

*Icones & Fictions Colorées*, Galerie de l'École des Beaux-Arts, Rouen

*Icones & Fictions Colorées*, Institut Français, Cologne

*Sculpture*, Galerie Zabriskie, Paris



**1987**

*Fictions Colorées*, Maison de la Culture, Amiens

*Icones*, Galerie Zabriskie, New York

**1986**

*Fictions Colorées*, Galerie Thomas Barry Fine Art, Minneapolis (USA)

*Fictions Colorées*, Palais des Congres et de la Culture, Le Mans

*Icones*, Galerie Zabriskie, Paris

**1985**

*Colored Fiction*, Galerie Anna Leonowens, Halifax (Canada)

*Fictions Colorées*, FRAC Champagne - Ardennes, Chaumont

**1983**

*Fictions Colorées*, Axe-Sud Art Actuel, Toulouse

**1982**

*Cinéma l'Épatant & Triptych, installations*, Usine Pali-kaio, Paris

**1980**

*Usine à Bastos*, Ateliers Contemporains, Centre George Pompidou, Paris

**1979**

*Usine à Bastos*, Paris

**GROUP SHOWS****2004**

*20 ans de la Collection Frac Champagne Ardennes*, Reims

**2003**

*Arles et la Photographie, Collection du Musée Réattu*, Fondation Maeght, Saint Paul de Vence

**2002**

*Les Regard de l'autre*, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen

**2000**

*2000 ans de créations d'après l'Antique*, Musée du Louvre, Paris

**1998**

*Présentation d'une collection*, Fondation Cartier, Paris

**1997**

*Heureux le visionnaire dont la seule arme est le stylet du graveur*, Présentation d'une commande publique pour le FNAC, Musée de L'Estampe, Rueil-Malmaison ; Musée du dessin et de l'estampe originale, Arsenal de Gravelines ; Musée-Château d'Annecy, SAGA 97

*5 ans d'acquisition*, FRAC Alsace, Centre européens d'actions artistiques contemporaines, Strasbourg

**1996**

*Extrait de la Collection*, FRAC Picardie, Abbeville et Amiens

**1994/96**

*Photographie et au-delà : nouvelles expressions en France*, Musée d'Art Moderne, Jérusalem ; Boca Raton Museum of Art ; M.C.P Chicago ; M.P.A, San Diego (USA)

**1994**

*La Tentation de la 3<sup>e</sup> dimension*, Mai de la Photo, Reims

**1993**

*Laiterie en friche - Europe en chantier*, La Laiterie Strasbourg

*La Photographie dans les collections publique françaises*, Pinacothèque nationale, Athènes

*Dada, Arp et après*, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Strasbourg

*De Brancusi à Boltanski*, Castello di Rivoli, Turin

**1992**

*P. Kern, B & M Leisgen, E. Nono, G. Traquandi*, Galerie Christine Debras et Yves Bical, Bruxelles

*Primavera*, Musée d'Art Moderne, Barcelone

**1991**

*Photographie Française en liberté*, I.C.P, New York  
*The second east-west photo-conference*, Musée d'Architecture, Wrocław  
*Photographie/ Sculpture*, Centre National de la Photographie, Palais de Tokyo, Paris  
*Sur-Nature*, Nouveau Théâtre et Galerie de prêt, Angers

#### **1990**

*Georges Autard – Pascal Kern – J.L Poivret*, Galerie Miguel Marcos, Madrid  
*D'un Art, L'Autre*, Centre de la Vieille Charité, Marseille, Objectifs 1968/1988, Kinocentre, Moscou  
*7 Situations d'Art en Franche-Comté*, Chapelle des Jésuites, Gray  
*Une commande publique*, L'Estaque, Centre d'Arts Plastiques, Hérouville Saint-Clair  
*Photographie Française en liberté*, Fondation Gulbenkian, Lisbonne  
*Aktuelle Kunst Europas*, Sammlung Centre Pompidou, Deichtorhallen, Hambourg  
*Chroniques des Apparences*, Le Volcan, Maison de la Culture, Le Havre

#### **1989**

*Nadja Mehadji – Christophe Boutin – Pascal Kern*, Salle Saint-Jean, Hôtel de Ville, Paris  
*Ateliers et Pratiques d'Artistes*, Musée d'Art Moderne, Strasbourg  
*1968/88 : 20 ans de photographie créative en France*, Kultur Abteilung Bayer, Leverkusen ; Ludwig Museum, Cologne  
*L'invention d'un Art*, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris  
*Das Konstruierte Bild*, Kunstverein, Munich ; Breme ; Karlsruhe ; Kunsthalle, Nuremberg

#### **1988**

*Objecto y Realidad – Vision del Arte Frances*, Foire d'Art Contemporain de Valencia, Valence  
*Questioning Europe*, 1ere Biennale de photographie, Rotterdam  
*Art or Nature*, Barbican Art Gallery, Londres

#### **1987**

*The Spiral of Artificiality*, Hallwalls ; Buffalo (USA)  
*Sans titre*, Musées, Houston ; New York ; San Francisco  
*A Visible Order*, Galerie Liberman et Saul, New York

#### **1986**

*Signs of the Real*, White Columns, New York  
*Constructions et Fictions*, Venise ; Naples ; Munich ; Berlin  
*L'Éternité Heureuse – Facon – Kern – Rousse*, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bar le Duc ; Galerie Passage, Troyes  
*Jeune Sculpture – Exposition Bilan*, Port d'Austerlitz, Paris

#### **1986**

*Surfaces sensibles – 15 artistes à la Salpêtrière*, Chapelle de la Salpêtrière, Paris  
*Sites*, Carrefour Création Contemporaine/Alsace, Strasbourg

#### **1985**

*Geschichteals Widerstand*, Kunsthall, Breme ; Karlsruhe ; Dusseldorf ; Hamburg  
*Des intrus dans la photographie*, musée des Beaux Art, Annecy ; Besançon ; Rosny-sur-Seine ; Le Havre  
*Images Fabriquées*, exposition itinérant, Musée National d'Art Moderne  
*Acquisitions 84 et autres pièces*, FRAC Picardie, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Beauvais  
*Pascal Kern et Patrick Tosani – Accrochage*, Fondation Cartier pour l'art Contemporain, Jouy-en-Josas  
*Livres d'Artistes, présentation des collections de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, BPI, Centre Georges Pompidou  
*Accrochage*, Galerie Zabriskie, New York  
*Un Monde Naturel*, Maison de l'Avocat, Nantes  
*1ere Biennale de Sculpture*, Fort Miot, Belfort  
*Journées Jeunes Créateurs, organisées par les revues « Art Press » et « Autrements »*, Galerie Zabriskie, Paris  
*XXXe Salon de Montrouge*, Montrouge (Prix Spécial du Jury)

#### **1984**

*La Sculpture Autour*, Galerie Zabriskie, Paris

L'Hôtel Revisité, Fondation Jourdan, Paris  
XXIXe Salon de Montrouge, Montrouge

**1983**

Art Provisoire III, Palais des Congrès, Le Mans

Présentation des Collections du FRAC des Pays-de-la-Loire, Abbaye de Fontevraud

**1982**

XIIe Biennale de Paris, section « Livres d'Artistes », Paris

Salon de la Jeune Sculpture, Port d'Austerlitz, Paris

À l'origine, il s'agissait d'une usine... Contributions particulières à l'étude de la ruine industrielle, « Cinéma l'Épatant », Usine Flipo, Tourcoing

**1981**

Sans titre, ou les figures du vide, Rennes

**1976**

Assemblage, mise en espace de la « Tête Mécanique » de Raoul Hausmann, Palais de Tokyo, Paris

## ORDERS AND RESIDENCIES

**1997/98**

Artiste résident, Maison du Peuple – La Fraternelle, Saint-Claude

**1996**

Commande Publique d'une estampe pour le FNAC, Délégation aux Arts Plastiques

**1992/93**

Artiste résident, Laiterie en Friche – Europe en Chantier, Strasbourg

**1989**

Commande Publique du FNAC pour le Musée de Marseille

**1987**

Médicis hors les murs, New York, Ministère des Relations Extérieures

**1986**

Bourse d'aide à la création, Ministère de la Culture

Commande Publique du FRAC de Champagne – Ardennes, réalisée à la fonderie de Sommevoire

**1985**

Prix spécial du jury, Salon de Montrouge

## COLLECTIONS

FNAC (FR)

FRAC Pays de Loire (FR)

FRAC Champagne Ardennes (FR)

FRAC Picardie (FR)

FRAC Haute Normandie (FR)

FRAC Franche Comté (FR)

FRAC Basse Normandie (FR)

FRAC Alsace (FR)

FRAC Auvergne (FR)

Musée du Havre (FR)

Musée de Belfort (FR)

Musée d'Aurillac (FR)

Maison Européenne de la Photographie (FR)

Bibliothèque Nationale (FR)

Centre National d'Art et de Culture George

Pompidou (FR)

Musée Réattu – Arles (FR)

Musée National d'Art Moderne (FR)

Musée d'Art Moderne de Strasbourg (FR)

Musée Cantini – Marseille (FR)

Fondation Cartier (FR)

Musée de Santa Barbara (2) – (US)

Musée de Baltimore (US)

Musée de Philadelphie (US)

Museum of Fine Arts – Houston (US)

Collection Royale Belge (BE)

Collection de la Ville de Lannion (FR)

Collection de la Ville de Vitry-sur-Seine (FR)

Fonds Départemental d'Art Contemporain de  
Seine St Denis (FR)

Artothèque Angers (FR)

Artothèque Nantes (FR)

Art Institute of Chicago (US)

(European and American private collections)