

## **INTERVIEW ARTIST JEAN-PIERRE SERGENT & ANTHROPOLOGIST NOËL BARBE, BESANÇON STUDIO, PART I, SEPTEMBRE 1 2023**

The artist and the anthropologist exchange and discuss about Art, Art History, Contemporary Art, shamanism, violence, sexuality and the various ethnographic influences that deeply inspire the artist's work. Filmed at the Besançon studio, September 1 and 15, 2023, Lionel Georges cameras, with special thanks to Christine Dubois for proofreading.

[Noël Barbe](#) is an anthropologist and researcher at the [Laboratory of Political Anthropology](#) (EHESS-CNRS). His work focuses on forms of presence of the past and their politicisation, forms of allocation of heritage value, the politics of art, the political epistemology of ethnographic knowledge, the experiences of anti-capitalism, and a political anthropology of literature. Much of this work is engaged in practical and political arrangements.

**- PART #1 / 1-5 | [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)**

### **SHAMANISM & PARIETAL ART**

- JEAN-PIERRE SERGENT: Hello, hello everyone, hello dear Noël. It's a real pleasure to welcome you here at Atelier; we met some time ago at the Courbet Museum in Ornans, and then again at the Popular Arts and Traditions Museum in Champlitte, France. You're an ethnologist and we've met already several times to prepare for this interview. We came up with the idea of having this discussion between us, because in my work, I deal with themes that you often deal with in your professional life. I'd like to thank you very much for coming here today, and also today was the birthday date of my father René, who would have been 97 years old, and I'm thinking of him a lot. Because it's the first of September, his birthday. It's an aside, but it's important too, because people are always with us in some way, even if they've gone to some other World... To begin with, I would just just like to quote this small extract as an exergue found in a book I'm actually reading, to start our conversation with. It's a book by Robert Byron, titled:

*THE ESSENCE OF THE WORLD: FROM RUSSIA TO TIBET, A TRAVELER'S CONFESSION* (1930)

"As a member of a community and heir to a culture that are today equally controversial, I wanted to discover ideas - if indeed those of the West were outdated - likely to improve the course of the World and, to this end, also to know, via the language of my own sensibility, the beings and things that constitute THE ESSENCE OF THE WORLD."

So there it is, our conversation is off to a good start. And our first idea was to talk about shamanism. Would you like to say a few words about it?

- NOËL BARBE: First of all, I'd like to thank you for this moment of dialogue, which is for me, a little exploratory, because, as you said, we met not so long ago, just a few months ago, in June, I think. We met around your work, in particular the art piece which is exhibited at Champlitte. In fact, we were able to exchange views quite quickly on a number of issues and questions that I think indeed we have in common on a number of themes; you mentioned shamanism, but not only, of course, and the question of Art, or in any case, the approach to Art, is also of great interest to me as an anthropologist. And this crossover that we can make in our questions and interrogations is of great interest to me... And, at the same time, if I may say so, I'm not extremely familiar with your work... I'm discovering it as we've talked together and prepared for this interview. I am interested in shamanism for different reasons... To tell the truth, it interested me because you are talking about it a lot, you take a stand on it, so to speak. At the same time, this question of an artist with a strong position on the specific issue of shamanism; there have been others, maybe we'll talk about it, I don't know? Pollock did it too! And at the same time, this question of shamanism is, as far as anthropology is concerned, much debated, if I may say so. It's debated, no doubt because we apply the word to too many things or too many situations, and that can muddy the waters a bit. In any case, what's common to all this is, in the end, the idea that a singular being is linked to a community: ritually or otherwise, with a community, travels through several Worlds, from a visible World to an invisible one, and, in a way, makes them interact with each other... somehow, summons them one into the other. And, for me, this question about shamanism, which is what you're working on; for me, it also has a resonance, in relation to everything you mentioned, finally, about the question of the Western World... The Western World's relationship with this question is rather complex, or sometimes rather problematic to be honest... This relationship with shamanism, in any case, raises questions for us Westerners, and perhaps we'll come back to this? About our ways and means of getting to know the World more deeply, which you sort of mentioned earlier?

- JPS: Yes, to start with, perhaps I'll show the visual, as you suggested

me, of the work I'm actually exhibiting at the beautiful exhibition. This is the witch Ixchel; and it's true that there's great energy in this work. The exhibition is called "Sorcières, sorts de femmes!" at the Musée Départemental des Arts et Traditions Populaires in Champlitte, and I believe you are co-curator?

- NB: No, I'm not co-curator... well, I participated in some parts of the exhibition...

- JPS: Yes, that's right, it's a very great exhibition! Of course, behind the term witch, it's mainly today's feminine conditions in general that interests us, since it's still nowadays a total disaster and shame (e.g. Iran & Afghanistan) for example. But even in Western Art, there are practically no works by women in museums, where there are historically absolutely not any works by women. And so, this Mayan Goddess (Ixchel), she has breasts that hang down, she's an old lady, she wears bones of death on her dress, she wears a snake on her headdress, she spills like a pot of water on the Earth to regenerate the Worlds. And in my work, that's often also what it's all about: trying to regenerate energies somehow... Because I think we're in a state of total loss of energy, and contemporary man is in a state of loss of vital energy. That's kind of my main favorite topic, one could say. And that's why I use so many so different and so varied energies... Whether they're sexual or colorful in my work; to get out of this kind of miasma, of depression. I mean, in a way, we're living in an undeniably global and collective depression... Did you want to comment on that?

- NB: Yes, well, perhaps in relation to the question you asked about the Western World, again. I mean, when you talk about it in terms of energy... I find that questions about shamanism, just like questions about witches, or witchcraft thinking, to put it another way; they question both our relationship to the World and our ways of knowing the World. In other words, in the Western World, roughly speaking, with the passage of time - but it goes back a long way, to tell the truth - it's a story that's similar to that of the 'spell', or at least, of what Western thought has done to the dream. Is the dream a reflection of reality? Or is the dream a gateway to another world, one that allows us to experience things differently? As, today, however, this question of dream as reflections of reality is extremely omnipresent (and reductive). It's as if it were no longer completely autonomous from the real, as if it represented reality in some way, in another form, in another way. And this, I find, is a question that runs through the Western world on countless subjects and problems; in the social sciences, for example... Just this; for a long time, and still today, we tend to distinguish between what is the REAL that science would come

to say...

- JPS: The real that science alone could understand and define!

- NB: And that people, who are not scientists, would only have representations, that would be somehow disconnected or with false visions of reality. And this red thread that runs like this, through the action of shamanism and communication between different Worlds, different modes of knowledge, the action you mentioned of witch thinking or the way the Western World has built itself on a thought of science. For me, it's more or less the same thread that runs through it all.

- JPS: But for me, as Mircea Eliade used to say, shamanism is what he called an archaic technique of ecstasy, and it really is a technique! And we know very well that for the shamans of Colombia (the Kojis), it takes them 20 years of apprenticeship to become a shaman, you have to acquire knowledge technique and science. So it's not magic. And I disagree, in this sense, with Claude Lévi-Strauss, who sometimes named it 'magical thinking'! Because there's absolutely nothing magical about it. It's another reality. And this other reality, shamans can define it and name it, because they can show it and map it. They can physically experience it, so it's totally wrong to name that 'magical thinking', as far as I'm concerned, because that would set up something that's non-existent, fabricated and imaginary, and dreamt up. For when you get into a trance, it's not a dream at all. This is exactly what Henri Michaux, which I will quote again later in this interview, said: "Was it a dream, an illusion, a hallucination? It doesn't matter, it just happened." In other words, one can't demolish and despise the whole body of spiritual knowledge that goes back thousands of years, in one fell swoop, just because it hasn't been scientifically proven yet. While today, medical studies on trances show that they change the brain's vibratory waves. For me, it's a material reality, as tangible and as surely as this table.

- NB: You're a little harsh about Lévi-Strauss...

- JPS: No, but it's just about that term of 'magical thinking', that I dislike totally!

- NB: I'm not really a Lévi-Straussian when it comes to the term; moreover, that's not the question, but it's true that he also embraces other things related to this question of the word 'magic', which has also been very much, I don't know, whether the right term is devalued... But in any case, it's been worked on a lot in a negative sense. Somehow, magic is something that's of the order of illusion, of the unreal, of what doesn't

happen... Or of what happens because our senses are deceived, altered etc... And so, this question of shamanism that we've been talking about and this access to other Worlds, for which the question of images is very present...

- JPS: Yes, of course!

- NB: It is very present; I like the question of Cave Art. You know a lot about cave art, because it's a subject that interests both of us. Parietal Art, as ultimately something that would have a link with shamanism or, because sometimes, it would represent shamans in a state of trance, effectively, in action. Or again, because, in the different forms that are there, in Cave Art, which range from geometric forms, ultimately, to figuration, would represent the different states of trance...

- JPS: Yes, that's true!

- NB: And it's a hypothesis that's been put forward by a number of prehistorians colleagues and is still much debated nowadays. But Cave Art that is often very much debated... About the shaman's actions and levels of intensity of shamanic trances, his state of consciousness perhaps?

- JPS: But, for me, what particularly interests me about Cave Art is that it's often a COLLECTIVE work, even if sometimes, of course, it's just the work of one unique artist... Because I had a bit of a revelation when I went to see the Pech Merle Cave with my sister. You can see these digital tracings: they were drawn by several artists at completely different times periods, that's it! And it's this 'layering', all its stratifications and layers of superimposed drawings that makes these works so interesting to me. It's not just one person, one artist, or one individual, but it's a whole collective thought process at work, drawing those paintings, here, in this cave. And that's exactly what's going on in my work too. Somewhere along the line, I try to mix images originating from different horizons, precisely to create this kind of COLLECTIVE strength and intelligence. And as always, there's sexuality... We see a well-drawn nude woman here, a woman here and an animal there. It's a kind of language of the collective unconscious that's present in this entanglement of Cave drawings and it doesn't matter what anyone says about it! But it's there, it does exist and has a powerful presence. And I wanted to show you a second example: this image comes from the film *Embrace of the Serpent*; it's a Colombian movie and it shows a shaman in Colombia tracing his drawings on the Wall. And for us, it means nothing at all, but maybe it means a village, the world of the dead and spirits, or the journey of the soul? It tells their personal and collective stories... As you can see, and I find it so touching, human and important!

And then, all that connection that we've lost to the World around us, the Nature etc. they've kept it... They're inside and encompassed by the World. We're outside Nature! And they, the First Peoples, are inside it... And they add Suns... I don't know exactly what it is, but it's a Presence to the World that's been acted upon. Perhaps we can't define it as Art? But it's much more than Art! It's being there, fully present into the World!

- NB: Yes, but with regard to what you've just said about the question or the fact that, in the end, we're talking about the figuration of a story, it's their story that's depicted, that's what you said. At the same time, you said that, for us, we don't necessarily understand these stories; and it's exactly the question of the 'missing part' (of Georges Bataille) there, in relation to these images and which, perhaps, are referring to a kind of double, dual articulation between the question of the image and the mythical oral narratives. How, in the end, these images may have been utilised as a basis for mythological oral tales...

- JPS: Yes, absolutely, epics as well !

- NB: Or, mnemonics stories. As there are, for example, shamans - I've forgotten where, to tell the truth - who have dozens, even hundreds of pictograms in front of them, and for whom it's a kind of support for telling the tribe's history, for telling their story. So the question of the relationship between the graphic and the oral, which is there, and orality, which is the 'missing part', is also quite interesting, I think, in this relationship to these Worlds which, for us, are Worlds that have both disappeared... and which, at times, we have misunderstood, because we have understood them with our Western eyes...

- JPS: Peoples without writing.

- NB: Without writing, unless you consider that as a form of writing, but without linear writing yes, exactly.

- JPS: Yes, but for example, for the Australian Aborigines, it's what Bruce Chatwin called *The Song Lines*. These songs tell the stories of how Aborigines could get from one point to another across deserts. Those drawings are in fact geographical maps, a bit like our IGN maps. You see what I mean: it's a mnemonic aid for surviving into the desert. They're not just regular aesthetic drawings but life-saving maps!

- NB: There's an anthropologist who had said that he examined the drums of Siberian shamans, which are in Museums and are presented as two-dimensional objects; I think that's what he calls them, two-dimensional

objects, and then one day he turns them upside down. I don't know if you know this anecdote? He turns them upside down and, as a result, he sees the images inside, the images underneath, in a different way, and he refers to texts, in any case, to things said by Siberian shamans, again, I believe, but we'd have to check; who finally say that these series of objects represented there on the skin of the drum, it's not figuration, it's not something that represents their pantheon of Gods, as it were. It's a compass! Which goes back to what you just said, it's a compass for orientation...

- JPS: Yes, to guide the shaman into the spirits world's, absolutely! Yes, that's important. I wanted to talk a little more about shamanism and Cave Art, I wanted to quote back to Antonin Artaud, to finish and to talk a little more about shamanism; since he made his journey to the Mexican Tarahumara Indians where he did experienced the hallucinatory drug of *peyote*. And I wanted to talk about the importance of the body's physical presence into trances:

*THE TARANUMARAS, THE PEYOTE RITUAL AMONG THE TARAHUMARAS, ANTONIN ARTAUD*

"I say: reversed to the other side of things and as if some terrible force had given you back to what exists on the other side."

- You just mentioned.

"You no longer feel the body you've just left and which assured you in its limits; on the other hand, you feel much happier to belong to the unlimited than to yourself because you understand that what was yourself has come from the head of this unlimited, the Infinite and that you're going to see it."

- It's a discovery of "God", somehow with quotation marks!

"You feel as if you're in a gaseous wave, emitting an incessant crackling sound from all sides. Things that used to be your spleen, your liver, your heart or your lungs come out relentlessly and burst into this atmosphere that hesitates between gas and water but seems to call things to itself and command them to come together."

There's also this idea of unity and fusion into almost every shamanic trances, and I've chosen a drawing by Artaud; it's not really a shamanic trance, but it's so violent, it's exactly what he's just told us: there's his head, his brain bursting and his head disappearing: "I'm suffering from an appalling disease of the mind". So, Congratulations to Artaud! And then I just wanted to finish with a sentence from Henri Michaux in *L'Infini turbulent*; and it's here too, an experiment with mescaline:

"I SAW THE THOUSANDS OF GODS.[...]"

I would have been mad to investigate and thus detach myself. This time, I

was in. People ask me: "But was it a vision or a hallucination? Or an apparition?"

- It just happened. That's all!"

I don't think there's anything to be gained by overanalysing things. Perhaps we'll end this first part with this quote?

- **PART #1 / 2-5 | [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)**

## **A FEW BOOKS ON ANTHROPOLOGY**

- JPS: So, in this part, we wanted to talk about few of the many books I've read on shamanism. I'd like to mention *The sky falls* by Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert, which is part of Jean Malaurie's very interesting Collection 'Terre humaine', which publishes some magnificent ethnological books, of course... He's talking about a shaman who is still alive nowadays, as one often talk about shamanism, but shamans have practically all disappeared and their cultures as well. But him Davi, is still alive and was able to do an interview with an ethnologist, and he talks about the *Xapiris*, the spirits that come to inhabit him during his shamanic trances. He recounts:

*THE SKY FALLS, 5 INITIATION, DAVI KOPENAWA & BRUCE ALBERT*

"The *xapiri*\* made me become something else so that I wouldn't lie. They really wanted me to become a spirit. They removed the forest and replaced it with some land covered in white feathers. They laid my image on the back of the sky in the center of their mirrors. It was very frightening, but my fear quickly disappeared because everything I saw was beautiful."

(Scenic beauty into the trances). That's really something one often experience in shamanic trances, i.e.: it's both very frightening... and very magnificent, it's incredibly beautiful! So, he says of the *xapiris*:

"Their hitherto barely perceptible paths became sharper and brighter. As fine as a spider's thread, they floated glittering in the air and came to cling to me, one after the other. So the *xapiris* are always preceded by the images of their path."

They show the way, the spirits are showing him the way!

"Then they follow our arms and legs like paths, where our elbows and



knees are clearings where they stop to rest. Then, at last, they penetrate through our mouth to the inside of our chest, which is the house in which they will do their presentation dance."

So he defines also the *xapiri* as follows:

\* "The *xapiri* (spirits) 'in their free state' have the mountain tops as their Home and move about on the mirrors of the forest. The *xapiri* who have become auxiliary spirits of a shaman 'father' live in one or more collective houses, the top of which is set in the 'chest of heaven', and the central place of which is also a mirror."

And one can think, here, by similarity, of the mirror effect also present in my work, somewhere, I hadn't thought of it, but it's true that, in my work, the viewer's image is also always reflected into my work itself. Here are two images of *Xapiri* spirits. We see a bird with, certainly, the sky or clouds... This is the tree... and here we see the shaman, with all the mirrors around and all the different Universes, and I find that really exiting: "At the center of the mirror of the spirits". And that's a position we should all have, as human beings: TO BE IN THE MIRROR OF SPIRITS! I think contemporary man has totally lost that place.

- NB: Maybe to take into account what you've just said, this quote, and what you said earlier: "It just happened! That's all!"

- JPS: Yes, absolutely, that's it!

- NB: "It just happened. That's all!" In other words, whatever we think about the possibility of the existence of spirits... of seeing the World or understanding the World differently, they're there because they're summoned in any case, and from the moment they're summoned, they're there and they become, de facto, actors, since they have a form of presence for certain helpers, they're there! This question, which is extremely important, once again takes us faraway from the question of representation, which we'll perhaps talk about later, because I deeply think that your work escapes the question of representation, to tell you the truth...

- JPS: Yes, thank you very much!

- NB: That there would be something else as well; it's also extremely important. You just quoted an important book, *The sky falls*, which was co-written by an ethnologist, Bruce Albert and someone from the human Amazonian Yanomami collective in which he worked. And there's a bond

that develops between the two, and in a way they co-write this text, this *The sky falls*, and then, in this operation, in a way, in this companionship or in this relationship between the two of them, there's a kind of reversal that takes place at a given moment. This is the situation I was describing for the person who was to be the ethnographer's object, who actually comes to the West, who comes to New York and says things, he wrote truth and relevant things, about the way we, Westerners or we whites people, whatever we name ourselves; how we finally treat, among others, what we call the poor, the homeless in a kind of indifference in the relationship that's nowadays present (which is not the case in his tribe)... So there is this kind of reversal that takes place in this book and this book, I think it's also important, because of that, this kind of reversal, of co-writing, the idea of writing together or one writes with the other; this word 'with', it's very important. It also raises questions, I think, about what we, on the Western side, are dealing with what we can... So, searching, gleaning, perhaps to use your term too, gleaning, actually, from these Worlds that are distant Worlds... Or that are actually vanished Worlds, what are we doing with those informations and to what extent we are responsible for the disappearance of those First Societies, in some way...?

- JPS: Yes, of course, we're responsible because we're the ones destroying these Worlds, of course! The West is 100% responsible, yes! Even if certain Cultures have destroyed themselves or just disappeared as well. There were quite a few wars in Mesoamerica, it is well known, that the Mayas, other Mexican tribes and later on, the Aztecs were beating each other to death! But it's true that capitalism is entirely responsible for the disappearance of all animal species and all 'Primitive' Cultures... And so many languages are still disappearing today, right in front of us! Yes, that's for sure, and it's a very sad reality! Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

- **PART #1 / 3-5 | [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)**

## **ABOUT TIME & THE UNSPEAKABLE**

- NB: To follow up on the question of the relationship between different social worlds, as they may have been objectified by anthropology without, without necessarily truly being claimed. The question I was asking myself, is how we translate the experiences described, how we translate them into our ways of doing or being, as it were, today. And Georges Bataille's question seems rather interesting to me, because, ultimately, what he describes is a kind of fact and path that, in a way, individualizes or

singularizes, a particular state that, when described in anthropological texts, is rather a collective state, or at any rate a state of relationship with the collective, of driving a collective mind. I'll read a small quote of Bataille, but not all of it:

*THE INNER EXPERIENCE*, GEORGES BATAILLE

"By inner experience I mean what we usually call mystical experience: states of ecstasy, rapture, at least meditated emotion. But I'm thinking less of the confessional experience, to which we've had to adhere until now, rather of a raw experience, free of attachments, even of origin, to any confession whatsoever."

In other words, what Bataille states is a kind of extreme detachment, in a way, an extreme detachment from the idea that we've been, up to now, attached to something in terms of experience, and that we're reworking it differently, that we're detaching ourselves from the original experience, to put it like that.... And in a way that's not necessarily a good thing... So we're redetaching from that, the way we Westerners sometimes inherit shamanism; or this duality of Worlds, or the idea that the action of the invisible is proposed, that it's there in a way, sometimes, doesn't escape this. In other words, it's singularised, it's individualised as an individual experiences and no longer at all collective, in a manner of speaking...

- JPS: Yes, that's true, but we live in a completely individual and selfish way. Of course, yes, yes, it's exactly like religion. One can't share a religious feeling if you don't believe in it collectively, with other people, of course. We're fiercely and unapologetically selfish. Yes, that's what shocks me deeply, of course. And what I want to demonstrate within my work, it's this LINK that exists between everything: the past, the present, the various cultures that have vanished just before us as well as different ways of thinking. And in some ways, every thought is valid somewhere! Yes, I think so...

- NB: Which seems to me to be related, although we'd have to talk more about it further, which seem to me to be related to certain eco-feminist movements, which do indeed claim the heritage of trance or the heritage of shamanism, in a new relationship established with Nature, among other things?

- JPS: Yes, so what? Were the shamans women or men? Does it really matter?

- NB: Yes, that's not necessarily the essential point at the moment, it's just

the idea that we're effectively remobilising other knowledges, other relationships to the World, than those imposed upon us, so to speak. As for we could go beyond this relationship imposed by : Modernity, Nature, Culture, and so on!

- JPS: Yes, that's true!

- NB: To put it a little like that, in twisting the stick a bit, you see what I mean!

- JPS: But we need to re-enrich our World, of course, our daily lives, of course, yes, but Art is perhaps there for that purpose, to re-enrich our daily lives; yes, that's true. Can we do it or not? That's up for discussion. And you also wanted to talk about the relationship with Time into my art works, because you thought that space was 'folded' a little differently and that Time could also be experienced differently?

- NB: I think I've read or heard somewhere that your work is a kind of 'expansion' of Time. Whereas I tend to think of it as a 'crystallisation' of Time, like this... That in your work, different conceptions of different relationships to Time are interwoven or articulated. So, sometimes, there's a question that arises, that we can talk about, which is the question of the timelessness, for example, also raises the question of the event: how do you paint it? How do you write? In the general sense of the term. How do you record what is an event? How is it worked out? How is it made possible? And in this respect, I think Jean Genet, for example, wrote some very fine texts lines, at that extremely tragic moment, which was the massacre of the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Chatila. And his seminal text, in fact, begins with a play with the time itself. That is, he doesn't start by evoking the massacre, he starts by evoking his strong ties with Palestinians before, the nice moments he spent with them, before and after, then, he moves on to the massacre. So, in a way, it's a game with time:

*FOUR HOURS IN CHATILA, JEAN GENET*

"Photography doesn't capture the flies or the thick, white smell of death. Nor does it tell you the jumps you have to make when going from one corpse to another..."

So, what he describes here, is the idea, in this moment of this tragic event, which is happening there, is the impossibility of recounting such an event somehow.

- JPS: Yes, well, that's very beautiful... But, in fact, what is the connection with my work?

- NB: Yes, the relationship to your work, I thought, was ultimately a question of the event or the moment. In your work, there is, de facto, the question of the transcriptions of trances or the moments of trances, you've experienced, how are they presents? How can you make these moments present into your art?

- JPS: I make them present by showing the TEMPORAL-FUSION that occurs during those trances. Because then, one have sometime this gift of ubiquity and simultaneity, which isn't always true, because trance always develops in a linearly manner in the brain somehow.. But, then, at one point you're in Africa, the next moment, you're in Siberia, then you transform yourself into a Tiger, then you're in a Whale in the middle of the Ocean... You're everywhere at once, you're in the whole World... It's what we can name a 'cosmic journey'. And to encounter all these energies and lights and forces, it gives you a POWER... One could say; we're not going to talk about Nietzsche's 'superhuman' but, it's something more. It's more powerful than the dream, it's, in fact, much more than dreaming, because you stay present and lucid; you're really present. And of course, real shamans can direct their journeys trip's. I can't, because I'm not a shaman. But those experiences have given me a power, a strength and an understanding of these incredible energies... Yes, that we can call cosmic... And perhaps also this deep, true and raw animality, that we wanted to evoke with Georges Bataille text's. There's something that's got to boost things a bit, that's got to shake and boost things up... It had shaken me up deeply and perhaps, by force of circumstance and the butterfly effect, will shake up or shake up the viewer at some point or other? It's like Pollock's paintings: maybe they took forty years to be appreciated. Maybe it'll be the same time for my work? But I want to work with these energies, yes, I do. As you said, the unspeakable is unspeakable, but it does exists really, in any way. That's it, That's it, it is THE PRESENCE! PRESENCE! Exactly!

- NB: It's presence, yes, and I wanted to pick up on something you said, I think it's in an interview or in a lecture you gave, I don't remember exactly, when you said: "It's a long-term job to be an artist!"

- JPS: That's true yes!

- NB: Is what you've just described, in the final analysis, an embarkation of events... The ones you've just described, the ones you speak about in fact, it's the trance, embarkation of that moment or those moments, that's

part of your long artist's journey...

- JPS: Yes, it's true, but it's a whole experience of being human. When I was young at 20, I was painting abstracts and then, at a certain point, I often tell the anecdote that in Montreal in 1992, I had painted a huge abstract canvas, which was maybe three meters by three meters size, and I stood in front of it and said to myself: wow! Magnificent! But, so what ? And then I stopped painting altogether for more than two weeks in saying to myself: I can do plenty of variations on this topic, but it won't be enough for me as a human being. So somewhere, out of intellectual honesty, I have gone beyond this abstraction achievement and reintegrated images. There are plenty of artists who stop at this stage-point: they paint their flowers or abstract paintings in spades, and then they do about the same thing during all their lives. But I said no, that's not enough for me. And then, in New York, there's also a second thing that forced me to go way further, which is that at the MET, there are the Asmats poles and these are totems where there's the great-grandfather, the grandfather, maybe the mother, the father and the child who comes out of the father's ejaculation, like that, in a carved wooden lace chrysalis. It's a bit magical and spectacular. And I used to go to the Metropolitan Museum almost every Sunday, or every other Sunday, and every time that I stood in front of those sculptures, I'd say to myself: in New York, maybe there were 50,000 or 100,000 contemporary artists, and none of them was capable of making such a beautiful and powerful work! I am talking about Art in terms of POWER, ENERGY and ENERGY-FORCE! And I said to myself: but why? Mostly because we are living alone and we don't have anymore the strength of an entire culture with us. Whereas Asmats works are made in a community by a social group that still possesses a mythology. We know that the Asmats carry the skulls of their ancestors with them on their belts and put them in their huts, so they always live with their ancestors... As for, this ancestor's strength gives them vitality... which is very rarely found in Contemporary Art. You can find it a little into Basquiat's works, because he had this attraction to "Primitivism" and a little to Art Premier, perhaps also because he was Haitian and of black origin... So, you can find this kind of energy there and, of course, you can also find it in Pollock's paintings. But I wanted also to work with these energies... And what are the primary energies mainly? Of course, they're Sexuality and Death, yes!

- NB: On these two questions, finally, the one you mentioned earlier, that is, that the fact of producing something, the same thing over and over again, ad infinitum somehow. And, despite your: "wow!" In front of your painting and despite that, it didn't suit you anymore, in a way. In fact, your work as an artist is, at the same time, a work in progress, a work on

oneself, of subjectivation, which is constantly evolving and always changing?

- JPS: Yes but above all, it's also the encounters that are the most important... Because I was lucky enough to meet this lady Glenda Feinsmith, who practised shamanic trances... If I hadn't met her, I probably wouldn't have done this kind of work... And thanks also to my numerous trips to Mexico too!

- NB: In other words, for you, an art work - I don't know how you call it, it's always a bit of a tricky word, but we'll use it anyway; a work of art that you produce, the word produced isn't very appropriate neither. In short, a work that you produce, that you create, should be at the same time, a work by itself and will also be transforming you intimately somewhere?

- JPS: No, it's not really me. I don't matter that much as a self, I am the artist, I'm just the sum of everything I've encountered. It's a sum, it is not...? I don't take away, I don't subtract, it's an addition. I am adding things, in some way, because yes, my work is an accumulation of disparate informations. Yes, I glean images and put them into my work, because they appeal to me. I don't always know their deep and ritual meanings, I can sense a bit of what they're talking about, but unfortunately I don't have the degree of spirituality of the Hindu Brahmins, somehow, I feel that there's an awakening and a development of consciousness that's present in the images I have chosen. Or there's also the Bindu point, the point at the center of the cosmic big-bang. I like talking about that, but somewhere along the line, I think we need humbly to know how to self step aside in front of the multiplicity of things that happen to us!

- NB: Yes, but at the same time, they are shaping you deeply!

- JPS: Of course, yes, they shape and change me, of course. Yes, it's the experience! That's why I sometimes say that it takes at least forty years to become a true artist. There are exceptions, like Basquiat, Picasso or others, but I think that you have firstly to learn a lot of things and then unlearn them... And then, finally, you do whatever you want to do, even if the price to pay is prohibitive. Because it's true that when it comes to be working on sexuality matters, here in France... The "Four Pillars of Heaven" Exhibition at the Museum of Fines-Arts in Besançon was a good example. It's not that I payed a high price, it's that I got absolutely no return on the time and energy I invested in putting on my exhibition at the Museum... And, at the end, somewhere along the line, this exhibition brought me: ABSOLUTELY NOTHING! I DIDN'T GET ANY FEEDBACKS ! it's

absolutely despairing...

NB: Yes, it's a kind of indifference. Maybe we can tip over on this, since we're already on the subject of your exhibition at the Museum of Fine-Arts in Besançon!

## - PART #1 / 4-5 | [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

### ON ART IN GENERAL & MY WORK IN PARTICULAR

- JPS: We're going to talk now about my current exhibition "Four Pillars of Heaven" at the Besançon Fine Arts Museum. But first, I'd like to talk a little about Contemporary Art in general. I'm going to quote Burroughs. I don't know from which book I'm quoting from, but he says quite rightly: "What does the money machine eat? It eats youth, spontaneity, life, beauty and, above all, it eats creativity. It eats quality and shits quantity." William S. Burroughs

And this is exactly true and tangible in the Contemporary Art that is exposed today. So I would also like to mention the critical situation of Contemporary Art in France in particular. And then, we'll come back to my exhibition. Antonin Artaud, in 1936, his "Revolutionary messages", already said it clearly:

*REVOLUTIONARY MESSAGES, ANTONIN ARTAUD, 1936*

" But before reducing intellectuals to starvation, before breaking up the 'elites' who make a society glorious and, above all, make it last; society should at least make an effort to get closer to these elites, that is, to understand them.

An eminent man to whom I complained about the sad situation in which artists have fallen in France, replied: - "What did you expected? In our World, artists are made to die on a heap of straw, when it's not the straw of a dungeon."

Well, that was more or less in the Van Gogh's period! But never the less, it's still happening today. Because the artist are relatively little respected in French society. I think much less than in other European countries. As less than 1% of French professional artists can make a living out of their work, whereas in Germany it's around 5%. It's not that much, but it's still five times more! And I wanted to talk about this because, at the moment, I've got this big exhibition at the Besançon Fine Arts Museum, which includes seventy-two paintings, making a total of eighty square meters,



which have been installed in the two staircases of the Museum for four years already! And unfortunately, I've only had a few press articles written by friends, but otherwise, no other feedbacks... If you like, it's pretty frustrating! You see the problem...

- NB: Yes, we went to see this exhibition together. And when we went through it, when we took different points of view, on the staircases and on the landings; there was something that appeared to me from a point of view, ultimately contradictory, which was at the same time, where we could see your art work and, in the background, we could also see the first painting in the next room; and we had also passed through another room (of 19th-century paintings) before arriving, and in the painting we could see, which was a painting, a nude painting, as I could remember? And that, in the space we had passed through, which, as you pointed out, was a room that presented works in the modes of representation of a Museum, a few hundred years ago, like in the 18th century. So all of a sudden we found ourselves in front of your work, I find, in a kind of confrontation like that, a bit harsh, between this paradigm of representation, which was where, roughly speaking, we can identify something: what is represented, who represents it and the spectator who is there, at least the three constituents... Not the four pillars, but the three pillars, in fact, of this model of representation. And I was thinking that, in the end, Jean-Pierre Sergent's painting escapes this. It's not representational at all! Which is perhaps what makes it so difficult, to look at, to tell you the truth...

- JPS: To be seen? understood?

- NB: To be seen. Is it because, in a nude painting, a human being is represented, well or badly etc.? But we have a direct key on the painting to enter into it, it's a human being and everybody know what it is about, it's obvious...

- JPS: Yes, a landmark and a vanishing point!

- NB: Yes, you can play with that, it's a vanishing point. I think that's one of the biggest differences with your work?

- JPS: Of course, yes, but I'll come back to that, precisely because historically, European painting has always been 'ego-centric': I took this example of this Maurice Denis painting's *Homage to Cézanne*, because it's a work that describes exactly what European painting has been (just a Man affair, purely aesthetic and despiritualized completely) for the last four hundred years, at least. In other words, in this picture, we see a painting by Cézanne, surrounded by mostly men, dressed in black, with

Hauts de Forme hats; they're very austere and there's only one woman, who's the wife of the artist Maurice Denis, who's there. So, the woman (in the History of Art) is within paintings in general, either outside of the painting (on the edge of...), or painted as the central subject (object of desire), naked to give men a hard-on, to put it more bluntly. And to titillate their senses on! And this painting is the very archetype, the apex of Art with this masturbatory perspective, centred on the Cézanne's painting (the 'masterpiece!')... Showing the importance of 'bourgeois' Art, in quotation marks... It's not that I want to criticise Cézanne's work in particular, but it's everything American artists wanted to get rid of...

- NB: Unwinding, yes...

- JPS: To break themselves free completely, because, for example, Rothko had been to Pompeii, where he saw the Villa of the Mysteries and others walls frescos, he understood then, that it was some 'façade' painting, as he named it, somewhere! Whereas this is a 'window' painting! And I absolutely want to escape from that concept. In fact, I wrote an entire text on the subject because, in my work, I always wanted to escape the window, because, ultimately, it's a 'narrow-minded' vision of the mind. It's a cartesian vision of a rational thinking, and it's not THE TRUE vision of the Human Being. None witty man think within a window frame, it's a purely architectural, narrowing, aesthetic, simplistic and monotheistic vision... Indians live in teepees and they would never put a painting like this in their teepees, which are painted all around, if you like; it's a painting with the four directions. So my paintings is also all-encompassing and geographically situated in the four directions, and I really want to escape from this European idea of painting. And then, in the exact same kind, there's of course Velasquez's *Las Meninas*...

- NB: Yes, of course...

- JPS: So there, the viewer enters, sees the little infant in the foreground; then he goes over there... he looks at that one and then... The painter is here at the very end... With his "asshole" ego: it's him, it's him who painted that, it's me, I! I painted *Las Meninas* and I fuck you all. Here's Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*, with the same system, of course, you enter the painting with the same glance (that of the prostitute in the middle staring at you), you enter there and then you go there and then you go there... It's a magnificent work that I love, of course, because it has an intrinsic and somehow, within quotation marks, 'primitive' force, if you like. But that's exactly how it works (a system for capturing the gaze), because, with that visual system, the spectator can enter into the painting, as you said... But on the contrary, at the opposite, the viewer

can't actually enter (or only with difficulty) into my work...

- NB: Yes, and about the question of the painting-frame, I don't know if this rings a bell, but there's an American author, Michael Fried, who has written several books on Courbet, one of which, in particular, *The Realism of Courbet*, defends the following thesis, which I find interesting because he defends the thesis that Courbet, in several of his paintings, not all of them necessarily, but in a way, intends to go beyond the framework of the painting!

- JPS: Ah yes, interesting, that's right!

- NB: And among other things, by hypothesising... all this being done at the same time as a debate on theater etc... And hypothesising that the figures showing their back into Courbet's paintings are, in fact, both something that incorporates the viewer and some representations of Courbet himself. Which means, there's a kind of interplay between the inside and the outside, and we're entering into something that could be thought of as almost three-D, rather than as a simple flat dimension of the painting. So there's that, and also the question of the painting's enclosure or the canvas's enclosure (finite space); I was thinking that, in a way, we're getting back to the question of the shamanic drums... That is, either we consider them, when we take them as figurations of different places, of a pantheon of beings, gods or objects, enclosed in surrounded spaces, all the same... But if you take them as a compass, that is to say, if one incorporates them roughly into your ritual way of life, or at any rate into the experiences you may have, geographically speaking, then it's the shamans... Well, you can think of it another way, you incorporate them into that in another way and it becomes, not something that's of the order of distancing, as in a show, but it becomes something that accompanies you in a fusional manner into your life experiences.

- JPS: Yes, it's an entry point...

- NB: It's an entry point and it's a point of accompaniment; it can provide information, in a way, for our life paths. And I was wondering, at the end, as I was making the comparison, if we couldn't say that, in relationship to your work, we're somewhat in the same register? Maybe I'm wrong? But you can tell me that without any problem... Because, if we consider that your work, or at least certain parts of it, is a kind of crystallisation of time, which comes to crystallise experiences: temporal, personal, collective, in any case, as you can see and understand them...

- JPS: Yes.

- NB: It's something that can accompany us

- JPS: Absolutely, that's true...

- NB: One don't necessarily see your work as a show or an event, but rather as a journey through your work.

- JPS: Yes, that's right, and there's also the large mural dimension in which the body can be taken on board. And that's very important to me. Yes, of course, the body has to be taken into my Art, yes, that's true. And I'd really like the audience to enter the picture physically. It's a bit like the experience I had in the Tomb of Queen Nefertari in Egypt, where I was really taken into another World... and this other World was made for the dead. I work for the living, or at least I hope I do so, but it's true that it's important to take spectators into Elsewhere, which I've been lucky enough to discover, experience and personally live.

- NB: Which is also, no doubt, a way of resizing our relationship with Art, in a way. This idea that it's not only something that's a mirror or a spectacle, but something that you actually take on with you in your way of living and thinking, more as in the Gilles Deleuze's model and more concerned with agency.... In other words, we don't produce spectacles or representations. We are organizing things, so to speak...

- JPS: Yes, we're not in the business of spectacle, but of spatial-temporal entanglement, exactly, that's right, that's it. We're not at all in the 'society of spectacle', whereas Contemporary Art is nowadays 100% in this 'society of spectacle'. That's why there's a complete hiatus between my work and main stream Contemporary Art in general.

- NB: So, shouldn't we not accept Museum exhibitions anymore? Which are a kind of culmination, then, not all of them... And not to the extent that I'm going to say it, but I'm twisting the stick: 'temples of spectacle'?

- JPS: Yes, but factually, if you don't show your work, then that work doesn't and will never exist!

- NB: But are there no other places to exhibit your Art today?

- JPS: Well, no. No, there's no other place. For example, my work is fragile and I can't show it outside because Plexiglas is extremely fragile... No, for me, there are no other places. Unfortunately, no; we have to go through Galleries or Museums, or Art Centers and that's not a bad way in itself! My

current exhibition had the merit of existing, and we shot a 360° video there, which is really superb. There will be some traces of it, after all?

- NB: And then there's the catalog...

- JPS: There's the catalog, with some very nice and interesting texts. Yes, it's not just a negative experience. Even if I'm a little disappointed by it, but I think it's the fate of all artists who have been alive at a given time period, which was of course the case for Van Gogh and a myriad of other artists during history etc. I told you the story about a farmer who nailed up a Van Gogh painting (*Portrait of the doctor Félix Rey*, 1889) to fix a hole in his henhouse. So that's what Art stands for! At the Museum, they used my paintings to 'decorate' the staircases. And what's more with Art? Anyhow, I was able to film interviews with friends, like Thierry Savatier or Nicolas Surlapierre, and I also gave a talk there: 'Eros Unlimited', so all is not lost. But it could have had more guts, more scope and more ambition, if you like, because it's a work of great scope and it could have been a milestone...

- **PART #1 / 5-5 | [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)**

## **SEXUALITY & EROTICISM**

- JPS: We're now moving on to a section on sexuality and eroticism, which are omnipresent themes in my work, as well as light, beauty, sexual and spiritual ecstasies. In a way, my work is subversive, one could say, and I wanted to quote a phrase by an author I don't really know, but his name is Francisco Alberoni, and he has this beautiful sentence on this matter:

*EROTICISM*, FRANCISCO ALBERONI

"There is, in man's eroticism, an anarchistic and antisocial component, an anxiety about his freedom that he himself admits with difficulty."

And it's true that all my (very erotic) work is based on limits: how far can we go? What can we exhibit? Where can it be shown? Can it be shown in New York or in England? Where would my work be totally not exhibitable, to the point of being directly imprisoned, for example, if I was about to exhibit it in Iran. And, I'm thinking, here, strongly of the Iranian women who are fighting for their freedoms (WOMEN, LIFE, FREEDOM). It's really horrible what's going on over there, and we're lucky enough to be in living

in France, where we can express ourselves more or less freely on this subject... So maybe I'll show a few visuals of my erotical works. This is the *Bones, Ropes & Flowers* series completed in 2015, I did a whole body of work on bondage, you see, it's in fact a reflection on violence, the body, the presence of the body; the body is of course present in ecstasy, but it forgets about itself (annihilation of the ego). This is what's essential! There are three visuals, and this one is also with a pattern... And this is with a skull. And this is my latest series of the *Karma-kali, Sexual Dreams & Paradoxes*, which I will present at the very end of our interview. It's a series I did last year! Here, it's a woman ejaculating with sperm-spilling male sexes all around her, like this. I can say, it's difficult to put a real number on that, but let's say that maybe about 50 or 60% of the images I am using, are erotics one.

- NB: So, what makes you choose, at a given time period, call upon or rely mainly on this motif or this sexual subject... for your work's raw material? What, in quotation marks, justifies it, but not in the sense of justice? What actually justifies the fact of summoning and working with images where sexuality is so present, what can you tell us about this?

- JPS: Yes, it's more a kind of KARMA-FORCE, more of an energy, that's what it is! I paint and describe more an energy: a primary, Vital Energy... Because without sex, of course, there's no Life. What shocks me is, when visiting Most museums in Europe, there are absolutely no scenes of sexual penetration. Whereas, if you go to India, even in the street, there are all the *lingams* and *yonis* that are representations of the interpenetration of the male and female sex. There's something essential that, for me, is desperately lacking in Western Art, of course (apart from pornography). In other words, historically, it seems as if Life is transcended or accepted, in artistic representations, only through the suffering and death of Christ... But I transcend Life through Life. And I don't need a God or anything else, because the body suffices itself, is self-sufficient and can transcend itself, that's all!

- NB: So, for you, in relation to this question of sexuality and its illustration into painting and Art, there's both this question of the idea, somewhere, of a freedom lost in our Western World, and the imagination and figuration, effectively, of sexual activity. There's the question of bondage, perhaps, which effectively comes back, on the question of working on limits and freedom... which you've mentioned several times, the question of the relationship to suffering versus pleasure, which is there. And then, it seems to me, there's also the question of...? In any case, that's what I felt or saw, rightly or wrongly, in one of your lectures at the Fine-Arts Museum...

- JPS: Yes.

- NB: Pursuing the question of an extreme or all-out approach to sexuality, there's both the question, somewhere, of energy, which we could come and also, the question of the relationship to a pantheon of Gods or as something that would be under the sign of the sacred?

- JPS: Yes, possibly, yes. But perhaps and indeed intimacy is something sacred by itself? Yes, without a doubt! But sexuality is very beautiful, of course, yes... It's an unspeakably beautiful, yes! So why not talking about it freely and display it widely?

- NB: On the subject of energy, you often come back to energy. Could you define this question of energy a little more precisely?

JPS: Absolutely not! Can you define the Wind, the Sea and the Stars? No! No, I can't. It's a personal and intimate experience... Somewhere, you're in front of something or with someone and you feel that there's an energy, which is flowing! I often recount this anecdote: once, I was in New York at a party and, on the other side at the back of the room, I saw a very beautiful Indian woman. I went up to her and tell her: "But you've got such beautiful, extraordinary energy!" She replied: "Yes, but it takes two, in order to feel that kind of energy!" She was in fact a Hindu yogi. So in a way, I'm also on that right spiritual path, I'm on the same path as the Hindu yogis, but well, I'm doing this with my own small means, with my art and paintings and small prints, but I didn't have had any spiritual teaching. I went towards what inevitably attracted me: for example: Mayan women's woven tunics, attract me because they tell of the Cosmos and Colors... and also about their deep humility in front of Life, too... I strongly believe that one must remain humble in front of the greatness of Life in general. Although my work is a bit majestic and extraordinary, but it's always done on a daily basis and consists of small modules (1.05 x 1.05 m) that I assemble together to create a monumental art installation.

- NB: Which corresponds in part, or can be paralleled, with what you were saying about your relationship to the work of an artist? Is it also working on yourself? Or to put it another way, is it work on yourself with others? A work on you, in which you take on board other things, other beings... Or a job of boarding the viewer with you?

- JPS: Yes, because each and every time, of course... as a painting only exists when it's completed and looked at (importance of the viewer or the buyer!). It's a truism, It's stupid and simplistic to say that, but it's a reality.

That is to say, especially in silkscreening on Plexiglas, as I work in reverse, without knowing what the end result will be, the last layer is the one that gives the final tone. As for, before I start printing, I put myself in a state of concentration. I'm talking to my father, my grandfather, the Earth, the Trees or the Flowers... It's not that I'm asking them to tell me what color to put on, but I need to be in harmony with myself, at this particular moment. If you like, it's true, you could say it's working on oneself, but being alive also means being aware of the World, of course. It's not about living alone. I'm not thinking about myself neither of my own asshole (like many other artists)... I'm thinking about the World as a whole... I'm thinking about beauty, Desire, Nature and exchanges; you're right, being an artist is a perpetual exchange, yes.

- NB: Does this refer to another word you also often use, which is VIBRATION?

- JPS: Yes, of course, yes, and I see it very well, because when people come to my studio, they each vibrate in front of certain paintings and not on others. And we each have our own vibrations scales at different times in our lives and also... thanks to or with, what happens to us during our lives: our failures, our successes, our encounters and so on. And, of course, as me, for example, I discovered Rothko's painting when I was only in my twenties and I discovered his painting on the cover of a book (and not into a Museum), and then it struck a chord within me. But it wasn't until then that I really felt moved by abstract art. And sometimes, you don't vibrate at all! In fact, some people will never vibrate at all during their entire lives. Because it's a blessing; for me, it's really a great blessing to vibrate, and as we say in English: 'It's a blessing and a curse'. In other words, we all have different sensitivities to Energies. For example, the images I collect and choose today are often found on Twitter and the Internet... Whereas before, in New York, I used to go to Museums and take photos, now I'm in Besançon, so I am collecting and gleaning my images much more on the Web. And as soon as I find an image that speaks to me, even if I don't really know why, maybe because of its energy, precisely; I put it aside, save it and work on it later... At the moment, this year, I haven't yet decided whether to work or not. I'm thinking about it and I do have a stock of maybe 5,000 pornographic images and other themes. And next season, when I've got the time and money, I'll choose a few images, redraw them, make it my own, so to speak and silkscreen them. I've got a gigantic corpus of images, and I like that. I'm a bit of a demiurge. I'll glean things and then use them.

- NB: You do, as you say, assemblage, you put things together...



- JPS: Yes, it's assemblage, but it's not collage. Because I don't like the term of collage at all, because then the images don't fit into each other (they don't merge), so I preferred the term 'fusion'.

- NB: Okay, and in your relationship to the question of sexuality, in the work you do, in a way... Maybe it'll shock you or bother you what I'm about to say, but there's a very heterosexual side to your work, in a way?

- JPS: Yes, but, it's what I am!

- NB: So, these questions of the relationship to energy and the possibility, indeed, of the relationship to the visible and the invisible, as well as building a relationship between the two, working with both... It doesn't correspond only; but I'm not saying that's what you meant... But they don't correspond only, necessarily, to a heterosexual energy, if I may ask so?

- JPS: Oh no, of course sexual energy is a whole and has its own energy (visual Greek erotic vase)! Yes, it's a whole, there's no need to differentiate them, not at all... As for me, I paint women because I really love women's bodies; if I had loved men, I'd paint men, but that's not the case! Wait and see, one never knows! But I am crazy about women's bodies (their pussies and tits, etc.), yes! And to come back to what you said about shamans: they were often people who've endured a lot of suffering in their lives, who've been ill, who've almost died... So we can talk about experience after death too. I've had dreams like that, where I've gone into the light. And the other day, on France Inter, Stéphane Allix was talking about his book: *Death doesn't exist*, about this very subject, because he's done some long researches and collected numerous testimonials on that. It's very interesting, because we've all had more or less the same visual experience, the same journey, the same encounters... That is to say, little by little, we see the souls... personally, I saw the souls leaving the Earth and I entered into this vortex, this maelstrom of light, and then I woke up just before entering the Central Luminous Vortex, in this final fusion. It's really quite stunning and magnificent! Then again, was it a dream, an illusion or a hallucination? In any case, many people have had this experience! So, shamans have had this experience of death because, very often, in trances, you die. In order to be reborn and be transformed into something else and new (the animals spirits). Yes, that's it: Birth, Death, Rebirth...

- NB: That exactly what you reported in one of your texts about a trance? You become a skeleton etc.

- JPS: Yes, absolutely, so let's talk about the shamanic journeys I made in New York. So, it's in the catalog of the exhibition at La Ferme de Flagey (Ornans, Courbet Museum) that I'll be showing into the video! So, it's about going on a spiritual path:

#### SHAMANIC JOURNEY #6, NOTES DE NEW YORK, 1993-2003

"I lay in a sunny field, crossed the wooden bridge and climbed the mountain path."

There's always a kind of elevation in every shamanic trances.

"In the middle of the path I met an Ant; then there were thousands; they ate my flesh and organs, and when my skeleton was all clean and white, they left me; then came a Snake that nestled in my belly to lay its eggs.

These Snakes are supposed to protect me from the Lion who wants to eat my skeleton."

Well, it's a bit trippy, but that's what really happened...

"I passed through a vortex of energy and was bathed in an Ocean of yellow light. Then I found myself simultaneously in the matrices of 4 Women of different races; they were there to protect me; they changed my skeleton into a crystal; I think they were holding the 4 canopies of the ancient Egyptians with my 4 main organs. Then they each placed themselves at a cardinal point of my body: on the right shoulder is the Yellow Woman, on the left shoulder is the Blue Woman, on the right leg is the Red Woman, on the left leg is the Black Woman. They placed a crystal in my chest and rebuilt my flesh. I was bathed in green light."

Then I also wrote a small statement:

"What's important in my work is Color and Lights. Images and symbols are the carriers of dreams and actors of the sacred. I've experienced, during shamanic trances, a place where you can meet the spirits; my paintings are souvenirs of these rare and beautiful encounters."

JPS, Notes de New York, February 2005

So there you have it: it's true that you can't really understand my work without knowing that I've been somewhat 'initiated' into these trances and that I've experienced them personally. I've encountered these energies and lights... It's a bit of a personal experience, but then, you can do what ever you like with it, it is a gift! Did you want to comment on that?

- NB: No, I think it's great! It makes a pretty nice transition for the next time, with the question of your work; with the colors, and everything we'd noticed: graphics, colors and images...

- JPS: Perfect! Thank you so much, Noël, for coming here today, for this wonderful interview, and thanks also to Lionel who's behind the cameras etc So see you soon, we'll try to film the part two next week, with great pleasure...

- NB: It's been a real pleasure!

- JPS: Thanks a lot!