

# INTERVIEW ARTIST JEAN-PIERRE SERGENT & ANTHROPOLOGIST NOËL BARBE, BESANÇON STUDIO, PART II, SEPTEMBRE 15 2023

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

## VIOLENCE OR RATHER THE KARMA-FORCE

- JEAN-PIERRE SERGENT : Hello everybody and hello dear Noël.

- NOËL BARBE: Hello dear Jean-Pierre.

- JPS: Thanks again for all the time you take to work on these interviews together. We're now arriving to the second part, because we filmed the first part on September 1, 2023 and today is September 15, and you wanted to develop a few ideas that we didn't have time to develop the first time we met. Perhaps you'd rather talk about violence, because it's a recurring theme in my work and you'd like to bring it up?

- NB: Yes, we started talking about violence after our visit to the Besançon Fine-Arts Museum, on a double idea, there's a fairly basic idea, if I may say so, which is a kind of observation, that the World is violent and that your work, both of our works, develop and build in the context of a violent World, that's perhaps the first thing. And the second thing that came up in our discussions was the idea that your painting was violent somehow. Or at least, that some people can feel it as a violent, it seems to me. The questions I was asking myself around this issue of violence and, perhaps in relation to the World in which we live, in this violent World; violence has several intensities, it also has several levels of action, of effectiveness and what struck me a little in your work was the relationship, ultimately, to some non-Western Worlds, in a general, global context, of our World which was and still is, a colonial World altogether. And how do you actually play with that, or negotiate with it? I mean, we're all negotiating with that, with situations that aren't necessarily easy, so how are you getting along with problem?

- JPS: Yes, it's a difficult and terrible question, and how can I really answer it? I negotiate with this problem, because I find; well, I can't say that I really find solutions, but I find some societies in which violence was much

more integrated and where it was much more ritualised and organised (and therefore more acceptable), if you like. Whereas today is a time when violence cannot be said to be ritualised as chaos and violence are the despair of Humanity. Poor people are dying in the streets... Yes, it's terrible what's happening today, and almost all of us are feeling as 'left behind'! And we talked a little about the testimony of Davi Kopenawa (Amazonian shaman), who visited New York where he said that the poor homeless were all, dying in the streets, abandoned, and moreover; we no longer have the structures to integrate the whole of Life and all the Living Beings. In other words, we have gone 'elsewhere'. This idea of capitalism sends us directly and inexorably down the line, as if on straight tracks into a sort of terminal apocalypse. And in fact, I wanted to quote him at the end of our interview: it's like in Werner Herzog's beautiful film *Where the Green Ants Dream* (1984), in which there's a guy, a homeless man, who says in this film that it's much better to be in the very last wagon of the train than in the first one, because Civilization is in the process of spitting itself out completely. And the strange thing is, we're living it to the fullest today - it's an undeniable reality! We're now in 2023, and every day there are climatic events that show us that we've gone too far down the wrong path. And perhaps, I like to pay homage to all those Cultures that lived life differently, in pre-colonial eras... After all, maybe it's just an illusion, maybe it's just a vain dream, a bit 'ARTISTIC'! And everyone's sensible had that dream. But I think it's important to reintegrate the 'natural' violence somehow: the violence of sexuality, the violence of death, the relationship to the dead, the relationship to sex... all of which must be present into my art, and that's, maybe, what makes its strength!

- NB: One of the difficulties for anthropology, at least in its history, is to escape this colonial relationship. Let me give you an example: Museums, in any case Anthropology Museums, or other Museums for that matter, are sometimes full of masks. And in the history of these objects, we realize that the Western gaze has focused mainly on the geometric organization of these masks and then, for example, when they arrived in the West; what anthropologists or museographers did; was, for example, to remove all the feathers they had on them, which had a ritual meaning for those who used them. By removing all those feathers, in fact, that were on the masks, so as to access a purer, stripped-down geometric and aesthetical form that interested them more. And doing so, for me, has remained a kind of black mark, somehow, and at the same time, you have to face it... It's a black mark on the history of anthropology in the relationship it has built up with the World and with other Worlds. In other words, it has sometimes behaved like an extractivist discipline. In other words, it effectively extracts things from a World in which they had a meaning, with the paradox that we're also trying to understand that previous meaning. And

at the same time, we bring them back into the Western World, stripping them of the attributes, that gave them their true meanings. So there's a kind of contradiction there, I think, in this relationship with other worlds that the West constructs, and from which it's hard to escape. And so the violence is also there, somewhere, in this relationship, to those 'First Worlds'... Which, sometimes, we make say, as in the case of masks... we make them say things; in any case, we grasp them under a reading grid that is not the reading grid that corresponded to the profound meaning they previously had in 'primitive' societies.

- JPS: Of course, yes, that's obvious! But in order to understand these 'Tribal Art works', such as the Yupik masks from the West Coast of the US; they are often articulated masks and they open like this, uncovering successive layers (with interlocking human and animal figures); and you can't understand them without having personally experienced some shamanic trance or being initiated. Because in the masks, there is for example: the Man, behind him, there's the Fish, there's the Whale and there's the Eagle in the end (the animal spirit guides)! It's all build as a shamanic interlocking and well, for Africa it must be about the same thing, maybe we call it something different. But of course, you can't understand a mask without talking to the 'spirits'. And of course, feathers are undoubtedly antennae for communicating with those 'spirits'. And we can't grasp that, because we are only talking about aesthetics, this stupid Western aesthetic has reduced and diminished Art for centuries; it has removed all the power out of these ritual objects! And it's a bit the same for my work somehow. People only look at it from a purely aesthetic point of view, thinking of a painting by I don't know who? Let's say a Fragonard painting's, for example, but there's absolutely no connection at all! As, in other words, I'm in the KARMA-FORCE, I'm in an energy flow and, inevitably, there's a dissociation between aesthetics and energy (because it doesn't depend solely on human aesthetic's), there's something that doesn't fit and that's exactly where there's the hiatus between the public and my work... I'm going to take the liberty of presenting a few visuals of violent works of Art, not just only from 'Tribal Art', just randomly, so we can talk about it together; because the first scene I think of, when we talk about violence, is the *Well Scene* from Lascaux. You see... There's a Bison with a Shaman who's ithyphallic, and there's also a Bird on a pole. And this scene is very famous. Georges Bataille described it well in his book *Lascaux, the Birth of Art*. And what does it mean? Personally, I think it's a Shaman in a state of trance, but also, the Bison is badly damaged, it's losing its guts and it's going to die. Of course: "LIFE ALWAYS FEEDS ON LIFE!" It's an inescapable reality and we can't take it out of our world. I also had a painting by Caravaggio of *Judith beheading Holofernes*. This is the violence of mythology, of male-female vengeance; it's also the

violence, perhaps, of society, the violence of social conflict. This painting is magnificent, but it still makes us feel a little uncomfortable. And of course, there's Matthias Grünewald's *Christ of the Resurrection*, which I haven't seen, but which I must go and see soon. It has to be said that almost all Western art is based on the violence of the scene of the crucified Christ on the cross... And all that suffering for that... For almost nothing ? it's terrible, it's even very inadequate and inappropriate, somewhere. It's frightening to think that death will save us from life, give us life again. I think it's a total error, a misunderstanding of Life. Here we have Goya's *Disasters of War* etching. It's the same thing: we can watch this, because we're not the ones who are killed or raped, we're the outside spectators and we're ALIVE. And we're watching these scenes of rape which are, in a way, eroticized, since we're not involved (which makes us more alive than the dead). And maybe what's disturbing about my work is that people are obliged to be part of it, that's all... I'm going to show some drawings by Egon Schiele, too. In Schiele's work, there's always this mortifying anguish in front of the body, and at the same time, this raw, unrefined sexuality, just as it is in real life... One can't talk about overflowing, pleasurable sexuality, because one can almost feel an uneasiness, a shame in the body and in its necessary, vital sexuality. Things you wouldn't feel in other 'pagan' or 'animist' cultures...

- NB: And then, perhaps to go back to Lascaux, because indeed, the question that arises around this scene, which could be a hunting scene... I find it quite telling too. So, if we imagine, for example, that we're between this Shaman and this Buffalo, if it's a hunting scene?

- JPS: Or both!

- NB: Yes, so are we really in a violent situation? If we consider, if we say to ourselves that, in this scene, the Bison isn't taken, as we can take Animals today, it's taken in another way... With another ontology, to put it like that. In the end, if we make the connection between this Scene of the Well in Lascaux and what I was saying about the masks... and what we can say about your painting, if we make a quick line like that, isn't the violence, in the end, is of being taken for what we're not? If we say to ourselves that the Bison is not an animal in the sense we understand it today, but an Animal Spirit, and that there is an exchange, somewhere, that takes place between the Shaman and the Bison. In other words, there's a kind of reciprocity there. The fact that you say that your painting isn't necessarily understood means that you're taken for what you're not, in some way... Because the violence is there too, of course?

- JPS: It's absolutely true, yes, you're talking about the violence of the

viewer who rejects my art work to some extent. Yes, it's true, it's violence, but maybe it's just stupidity and ignorance, or maybe it's fear too? Because I talk about things that perhaps disturb and frighten people (Pleasure, Death and Sexuality). All Art that interests me, could disturb, like here for example, I've chosen a few works of Mexican Art: I find this statue magnificent, because you can see the organs hanging out of it. It's a Priest, a Shaman, who goes beyond Death. It's a bit pretentious to say that, but I really hope that my work is also too! And all these cultures went beyond Death. And here we see Aztecs piercing their tongues. Contrary to what one might think, Mesoamerican societies practiced a great deal of self-sacrifice (and not only human sacrifices), as you can read in Bernardino de Sahagun's *General History of Things in New Spain*, book's were he recounts the lives, the countless feasts, the rituals and the self-sacrifices that the Aztec priests and elite imposed upon themselves. They were in their monasteries or on their pyramids and during the night, perhaps every two or three hours, they would wake up (just like the monks in the Cistercian abbeys) and pierce their tongues for the women or their penises for the men, to regenerate the Worlds and feed the Gods. In this particular moments, they could recreate links with the Worlds (the underworld, the infra-worlds, the world of ancestors and spirits, etc.). One could call it sacred, or say that they were just poor, enlightened morons... But somehow, de facto, they belonged to the World and the Cosmos, and it's this belonging that I want to talk about too. Here, we see accurately a priest piercing his penis in order to enter into a trance and meet with the Cosmic Snake Quetzalcóatl, the *Feathered Serpent*. The pain allowing him to switch reality, at a certain point in time and to some extent, to speak to the spirits, quite simply... And there you have it.

- NB: It's a kind of expansion of the Worlds and new relationships with other Beings.

- JPS: Yes, even an expansion of Nature, because Nature is much more than what we can see of it, at least for Shamans and Shepherds! (ref. the book *Serpent of stars* by Jean Giono)

- NB: For Shamans, yes. And in your work too?

- JPS: Yes, I do hope so, but do I succeed or not? The question remains?

- NB: The question remains because, once again, I'm discovering your work as we talk together. So, it seems to me that what you're doing, the way you talk about it, the way you write about your work, is that we're less in the register of the 'image', or at any rate in the representation of something, of the image of an absent prototype that would come to evoke

it, that would come to summon it, but rather in something that comes to equip lines of escape in relation to our World and say that it comes to reintroduce other possible relationships to the World, other forms of attention to the World; that could allow us; you mentioned capitalism at the start of our interview, which might enable us to escape, or in any case, to step aside from what's coming down on us so violently, in real life!

- JPS: Yes, absolutely, that's true. Yes, I'm anti-capitalist by nature. Yes, of course, I'm an anarcho-communist. It's true, as Jean Malaurie so aptly put it. In fact, that when you look at all these ancient peoples who have survived with such difficulty... because they lived, for some of them, at the end of the known world (for the West) and in places that were not always liveable and often hostile, like the Indians of Tierra del Fuego: the Selkams, the Yámanas and the Alacalufes etc., who lived in boats and they took their fire into their canoe and they were able to survive for millennia, a good ten thousand years. And then we, the Westerners arrived, including English hunters who killed them like rabbits. With this lack of respect for diversity and, above all, thanks to its technology, as the West always thinks he is right no matter what. And actually nowadays, we have reached a certain tipping point, that is to say, inevitably, when everything and the economy was running well, you know like in the 60s and 70s etc., when everything seemed to be going well... Although some Americans, including certain artists, writers like Ginsberg, Burroughs or Kerouac had already understood that the World had entered its declining period, that's all. But maybe they understood long before we did, because in France, what did we have? The 'nouveau roman' and that was it! You hear what I mean: we had absolutely no awareness of the real state of the World, despite the Cold War? And maybe by living in the United States, I became fully aware that this World was deteriorating at breakneck speed and that I wanted, not to save it, but to talk about it and bear witness to it...

- NB: But, when you say that everything was going well?

- JPS: Yes, for some, that was the case, for Western countries in particular, to explain and clarify, that's all.

- NB: And then, no doubt, for some of the Western countries, for some members or some components of the Western countries, because we had this sort of illusion, effectively, that everything was going well, was also achieved at the cost of the lives of human beings whom we despised.

- JPS: Yes, with colonialism, of course. But today, the 'King is naked', in other words, everything is coming to the surface... And we're surprised.

We shouldn't be, but we are a little surprised of the terrible state of degradation of the World and our Planet!

- NB: That's another reason why your work is violent.

- JPS: Yes, it's a bit of a revealing mirror.

- NB: Yes, it is a bit revealing. It also says that, it seems to me; a state of the World, which is not very delightful, to tell the truth. A state of the World that we know will undoubtedly end badly and violently. When we talk about violence, violence has already begun, it's always there...

- JPS: Yes, but the World is not comfortable. The World is not something comfortable. And I always remember that I was in New York in 2001, at the time of the terrorist attack, and the year after I had an exhibition at Taller Boricua, which is a Puerto Rican Art Space. I was in the car with the director, Fernando Salicrup, because we'd gone to buy some lamps, and I told him: "It's really shocking what had happened!" Then, he replied: "But Jean-Pierre, the World has always been like that!" You see... So, it's true that in Europe, some of us survived the two World Wars, but we had soon forgot all about it. And it's almost normal, somewhere, for human beings, for the living, to forget... Because, otherwise, the weight of History would be terrible. Would it? But then what?

- NB: Perhaps, yes, the weight of history is always there, somewhere, or in any case, the past is always summoned, differently, depending on who summons it. But the World is not a comfortable place, we agree on that, the World is not comfortable!

- JPS: Well, that will be the end of this part on violence, thank you.

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

### **ABOUT ART #2**

- JPS: Dear Noël, we wanted to do a short section on Art, so we'll be talking about Art and a little about Contemporary Art too, and the state of the Art Market, which are big topics, but we're not going to bog down the whole video on that neither, because we could do a 24 hours interview on that specific matters. But I wanted to start with a little phrase that I really like. It's from Mankiewicz's famous 1963 *Cleopatra* movie, starring Lyz Taylor and Richard Burton, where Caesar says: "Why are the eyes of

statues always lifeless?" And this sentence really fundamentally poses the question of Art: is Art an ersatz for Life? Or does Art manage, at some point, to reintegrate Life and develop energies that are 'healing', that can heal us, that can enchant us? It's a big question, and it's clear that today, as we've often talked about together, we've reached a Culture that's a levelling down, like an anti-life space. There's no longer any more ethics in Contemporary Art, which functions only with and thanks to its more or less transgressive and provocative function, or with a profoundly insipid Art... (we'll be quoting Jeff Koons in a moment, of course), but almost like everything else around us. Because, somewhere along the line, everything becomes tasteless; it's just mashed potatoes: only for old people with money and without any judgment, nor culture, it's terrible and horrible as well... Everything is politically correct and purchasable by the most ordinary of people, standing out from the other quidams because those very rich people, who are buying Art; just stand out because they can buy in Auction Houses, works at a million, two million or three million dollars or euros, etc....

- NB: Indeed, we could mention Jeff Koons, which could be an extension of what you've just said! On Koons, there's this 'superb' sentence, I think, obviously at the second degree: "My work is fighting the need for a critical function of Art and seeks to abolish judgment so that one can look at the World as it is and accept it." So, perhaps this quote shouldn't be taken to mean more than what it does: that we're dealing with a quote of circumstance, imbued with pure cynicism in relationship to his work, in relation to the World. In my opinion, two things are at stake here: the question of distance from the World, that we can look at the World, that we do look at it...

- JPS: Yes, we don't really live in it anymore, we just watch it and remain only spectators of it!

- NB: We are not active, we are just looking at it, we are subjected to it, you're facing its image, kind of, somewhere... it's a perfect illustration of Guy Debord's (*Society of the spectacle*); in other words, instead of being in the World, you're looking at this World as an image. That's what Koons is saying. And then, there's also the question of acceptance; that is, roughly speaking, Art no longer has a critical function, in any case; his art is what he says: "my art has no critical function". accept the world and be happy, just as it is!

- JPS: So does capitalism!

- NB: That's what we were talking about earlier, the state of the World.



And at the same time, there's a kind of double thing going on; there's both, effectively, a will to separate, as it were, Art and the World, and 'at the same time', if I may say so, to use a Macronian (French president) sentence that I love...! And 'at the same time', it gives to Art a role within the World. It's this paradoxical side that Art plays a role; at the same time; the aim of which would be to enable us to detach ourselves from the World itself, to look at Art only insofar as it is detached from this World. A sort of thing like that, which pile up, which articulate, which are there, present. And I find that, in the end, what's at stake in relation to what you were talking about... In relation to Koons, I had images of his famous series of bags, created with Vuitton (2017), on which he reproduces, copy, borrows, summons up... images of ultra-recognised painters like Van Gogh... And he even made another one with Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* and so on. The whole collection was inaugurated at a huge and prestigious banquet in the Louvre. One might well also ask what is the role of Museums in this respect too... Inaugurated at the Louvre, with some rather wealthy people, who actually belong to the World of Great Fortunes! And so, what's at stake here, finally, this sort of fusion, in a way, or this articulation between what is, let's say, Koons or Contemporary Art; whatever you name it and the luxury industry, raises questions. In other words, Art's ultimate aim is to do branding; to build a strong and universally recognisable image of products, to participate in their distribution... It's maybe the first thing? And then, this idea, which we've mentioned several times earlier: '*the damned part*' (of Georges Bataille)

- JPS : Yes, it's true.

- NB: Which would mean that this sort of acquaintance between Art and Luxury, that would lead us to something on the side of the superfluous. In other words, there would be... de facto, luxury is already defined by this: it's a superficiality... That's where we're at, and somewhere along the line, it assigns or summons and pulls Art to that side, to the side of the superfluous and the useless, so to speak... And in all this, Koons stands out, even if he's not the only one at the same time... But in the end, there's a kind of Koons paradigm like that, both of summoning the image of a painting reduced to an image on a bag, with the double signature: Louis Vuitton and Koons, and then a reproduction of the rabbit, to open and close the bags...

- JPS: Yes, the brand name, yes, yes!

- NB: In the end, we're into something that speaks for itself. So, the question that arises at this point, I think, in relation to the question of Art, is, in which side are we on? Are we on the side of the victors or the

vanquished? Are we on the side of Art as seen by Koons, Pinault and Arnault, or are we on the side, for example, of Art as it can be reworked in other ways in some protest movements, which escape, so to speak, the systems of the Art that are, the International Art Market with, in fact, galleries, museums, big exhibitions, with big names as curators, who also, in one way or another, can question us a lot?

- JPS: Of course, and to continue, I'm going to quote a little passage from an article, but before I do, I'll start with a small quote from Andy Warhol:

"Being good at business is the most fascinating kind of Art. Making money is Art and working is Art and good business is the best of Art."

So it's the real truth that buying Art today is the simplest and most profitable way to make a lot of money, easily and in a very short time period - for the very rich, of course! Here's what's explained in an article I read last year, in *La Gazette des Arts*, on June 22, 2022, just after the start of the Ukrainian War. It talks about the selling price of some really young artists' artworks into auctions, because there's also a site called *Artprice* that lists every time one artist sells a work in an Auction House, it's listed there, in *Artprice*. They know exactly who's selling, what and for how much? This article was written by:

*ART AS A SAFE HAVEN, LA GAZETTE DES ARTS, JUNE 22, 2022 BY VANESSA SCHMITZ-GRUCKER*

"When even five years ago, a young artist was taking his first steps in the auction house at around \$10,000..."

Ten thousand euros, is about the price at which I sell my own Plexiglas paintings!

"Today, it's not uncommon to see starting selling prices at around \$300,000 - \$500,000."

Today! So, that is to say that within less than ten years, it's multiplied by about hundred times, so to speak!

"However, we believe that inflation will work in the Art Market's favour, in the same way as for fine watches, jewellery, yachts and luxury cars; this one is more secure than the financial markets, shaken by the war in Ukraine."

So, Art escapes every bad news and so people invest and speculate in it;

well, that's not a bad thing in itself and somewhere, it also creates wealth! I'm not shouting about it; I'm just saying that, we artists, who aren't part of this Market can hardly exhibit nor sell our works, because it has no price value into the Art Market. And so, if you're not quoted in Auction Houses like, for example, my paintings. I can put their price at five thousand, I can put them at a thousand, I can put them at forty thousand, in fact, nobody really buys them. Price doesn't really matter and doesn't have any sense anymore! Because, as long as you haven't entered this fucking Market, this financial system, you have no existence as an artist. And that's the reason why I absolutely have to show and exhibit my work. That's why I showed it at the Besançon Fine Arts & Archeology Museum. It didn't really help me, but hey! that's really and truly what's going on for art and artists nowadays!

- NB: To echo your quote, I have another one, by Aude de Kerros:

*THE HOAX OF CONTEMPORARY ART: A FINANCIAL UTOPIA*, AUDE DE KERROS

"The work and its value are the result of the holy arbitrary declaration of the network that makes it, which constitutes a chain of production and distribution. The extraordinary virtues of contemporary art are those of secure financial derivatives, reserved for the very high end of the market, of cross-border liquidity unencumbered by the constraints of the state, the law or the bank, of a disembodied, global currency. Contemporary art is both an institutional and a financial utopia...".

- JPS: Yes, it is absolutely true!

- NB: In this question that you were also asking, I think, last time, in relation to this quote then, you have to believe in the 'magical' value of Art (The Golden Calf) somewhere, in any case, for those who circulate a form of belief, effectively, in the value of Art; that we can discuss, anyway, what we call 'works', we can make the connections between this belief or we can call it something else... This idea that a work of art has a value, and that you're ready to put a lot of money into it; speculating on it, but not only, sometimes... But in a way, we can also say that the relationship with money is in the same kind. In order for a currency to work, one have altogether to believe in the value of that currency, so I thought this connection was also quite significant in terms of our relationship with things.

- JPS: Yes, this relationship is equal, absolutely, yes! But I'm ready also to show part of the relationship between Art and politicians, also because we haven't talked about it enough. I've been thinking about it... because

today, there's also one thing that has forced and implied, de facto, the total disengagement of Art from the public sphere; it's that nobody, or at least politicians, need artists anymore, as they did in the days of Popes, Princes and Kings! The most striking counterexample is Napoleon, the David's *Coronation of Napoleon* painting. And in those days, photography didn't exist of course; painters were essential to power! So, only writers, other than painters, could have described Napoleon, self-consecrating himself. So, to tell you the truth, I don't even understand why there are still Art Schools today, because it's not at all profitable for societies! It's really superfluous, as we've already talked about, and this ambiguous relationship... As for religion, because religion has provided a living for so many artists... But well, religion is disappearing now, so there's no need for artists, only rich people need artists today. But now I'd like to show a few artists who have created Worlds that have to do with the imaginary and dreams. Here, we have *The Dream* from Douanier Rousseau, a magnificent painting of a woman lying naked on a sofa and paradoxically in the middle of a jungle! It's completely anachronistic and out of place, it's also completely... I don't really like the term "surrealist", but maybe the term "magical", although I don't really like it neither, but there's something of that in this painting! And then there are the wild, bewildered and curious looks of the animals: their desires towards the naked woman... Also with those big flowers, depicted like that... And they're not lost paradises, they're paradises he had recreated and reinvented. We artists are a kind of 'paradise creators'. This is *The Tree of Paradise* by Séraphine de Senlis also, with her magnificent paintings, in which she mixed blood and I don't know what else into, to create her 'secret magic formula' of paint, and it's equally magnificent. These are other over-augmented Universes... And here, I wanted to talk about Mark Rothko, for showing the dimension of its canvases and those of other American painters... Because, in my work, it's often hard to understand why it's so big and monumental! But when I arrived in Montreal, I realized that there was another dimension. Space had a different scale in America, and you can see that Americans painted monumental pictures, over three meters high and so on. Like this one, by Barnett Newman, which measures 5.40 m and is at the MOMA in New York. It's a magnificent canvas, too, in which you can enter and melt into the color bodily. And I really want the viewer to reintegrate color and the image into my work and have an intimate, bodily experience, as we've already talked about, just as within Pollock drippings, it's a photo you suggested. And this is *The Deep*, a painting at Beaubourg Museum where you can see that it's a representation of a woman's sex (a vulva) and Pollock ejaculates on this woman's sex (spermic painting), it's magnificent! I don't know if everyone will see it that way? But it's rightly titled *The Deep*... And I also wanted to mention Caspar Friedrich, a German Romantic painter whom I didn't like that much. A friend of mine

had given me a book about this painter long time ago. I thought it was a bit mawkish, but in the end, on closer inspection, there's a notion of extreme loneliness and infinity in his work (*Chalk cliffs on the island of Rügen*)... and perhaps of nostalgia, of a World that's disappearing? But at the same time, Nature is there, comforting and present, some how, in these paintings. So that's what I wanted to show you!

- NB: Are you a nostalgic person?

- JPS: I've been extremely lucky in my life to experience some very, very intense moments! So, inevitably, I think about them from time to time... So, obviously, yes, I'm a bit nostalgic... Because, between us, of course, this video will be broadcast... As it's true that living in Besançon compared to New York it is not the same scale! At the same time, I love the City and Life here! But there's absolutely no feedbacks on the art you are doing. It's like living with the walking dead, the zombified...! Yes, because there's definitely no interactions between you and the public, and that's what really deeply shocked me and even when I came back, every time, coming from New York, landing in Geneva, in London a little less so, but also in Vienna, you arrive and PFOUHHHH... The energy is gone, lost, disappeared. I once discussed about this matter at length with a friend, Gabriela Eigensatz, who was cultural attaché Swiss in NY, in her beautiful office near Parc Avenue, and she told me: "But Jean-Pierre, the whole of Europe is extremely sad!" And it's true that I had felt it, but had never put it into words. And in New York, we're not sad. I kind of miss that joie de vivre, yes! And I really hope one can feel the joy and vibrations of Life into all my artworks!

- NB: Earlier, you mentioned Napoleon and the painting of his coronation. Finally, you mentioned one of the functions that Art has had at a given moment, namely: Court's Art... to put it very quickly. Let's just say that the idea that those with power or some power also needed to be represented as Men of Power, and that this perhaps also helped to reinforce their power, no doubt about that!

- JPS: Yes, it was essential! The Church wouldn't exist without all the religious images. You can't go and colonize, Christianize and change people's religion, if there isn't a whole panoply, a corpus of images of Christ on the cross, the Virgin Mary, and tutti quanti... So this iconography was eminently essential because without it; because these were people who couldn't read 'our language' so, that was the sine qua non condition of the very existence of the Church, to have and distribute images.

- NB: But then, aren't we trapped by the very meaning of the word 'Art'?

- JPS: Perhaps, yes, no doubt, but I don't have another word for it, and it encompasses many things, of course. But for me, Art implies a kind of grandiosity and also... a kind of spiritual greatness and then also, some generosity. I like generous people, I like people who go beyond the conventional framework, yes, that's it!

- NB: The relationship with Art is and has also been hateful, or at least among those who, as we've mentioned in part, have only a commercial relationship or a political and appropriative relationship to it. But what I want to say is: isn't the word Art a trap somewhere and somehow?

- JPS: Yes, but 'So what!' You need words to talk about and define things... Well, then...

- NB: Yes, you need words, but Descola, for example, talk about 'figuration' instead of Art?

- JPS: So, if you've got time to waste and want to think for twenty hours to find out and redefine another word, then, afterwards, we just "try to fuck the flies"... I think that when one talks about Art, everyone understand what it means. As well as you can talk about Aboriginal Art, Japanese Art or Egyptian Art, and so on... It's an all-encompassing term. It's like when you talk about Life, you can't dissociate anything from it. I don't know, maybe?

- NB: Yes, but what about Art, if we could have talked about it to the people who painted the walls of prehistoric caves?

- JPS: But none of that was dissociated at that time, because then, maybe, professions had not yet been separated yet, it came much more later with the political organisation of the big structures of societies.

- NB: What I mean is that the word Art, in fact, introduces dissociation as an autonomous part...

- JPS: Yes, but like any language, every language and definition is partial and fragmentary... And the word Art, in Germany, will probably not have the quite same meaning, as here, in France. You see, it's a never-ending debate! We have to communicate, and I wouldn't waste too much time thinking about it... Pursuing my thought, I'd like to quote a Nietzsche's sentence on this subject: "We hear only those questions to which we are able to provide an answer."

That's exactly it, and that's why people don't really understand my work,

because they don't have the deciphering skills to understand what I'm saying, what I'm painting. And likewise, you say, Art! So, each time and for each person and each artist, we'd have to reinvent a different, personal definition! So we're not out of the woods yet!

- NB: No, it's a way of saying that the word "Art" comes from a particular historical configuration: It belongs to the Western World, for the most part, and so this word, too, has been transported to other Worlds, or has been transported into our way of looking at things, or trying to understand things... Which comes back to what Nietzsche says that, roughly speaking, we look at things insofar in the way we are able of responding to what they're telling us!

- JPS: Absolutely, yes. That's it, we're prisoners of the definition of a word, that's all; we're prisoners of it!

- NB: And, in my opinion, it's not just a case of "fucking the flies", it's about thinking that, by grasping the World with other words, maybe we could understand it differently?

- JPS: Yes, that's obvious! But as long as one don't have the intimate experience of Death or Sexuality etc... we don't really understand anything about the World! Yes, I think it's the intimate experience, it's the body that makes its experiences there, with Art too! Why do I feel good in Pollock's paintings? Or why do I feel good in Aztec Art? Because my body feels good in it. Art, it's a bodily and intimate experience too! So; indefinable with words, we forget about it; because it's not just an aesthetic or intellectual experience. I wanted to end this section by quoting Thomas Bernhard; it's a book that everyone should absolutely read, called: *Old Masters*; you'd have to read the whole book, but he says this:

*OLD MASTERS*, THOMAS BERNHARD

"Painters did not paint what they should have painted, but only what they were commissioned to paint, or what brought them money or fame."

Or both at the same time! In other words, that's what Art History and that's what Western Art are all about. If you go to Museums, the works have been painted for Churches, princes and the powerful (today, bankers and collectors!) and so on. But on the other hand, there's Caravaggio, for example, who has come out on top. There's Rembrandt, too, because there was a great and beautiful spiritual presence in his paintings, or Vermeer of course! But most of the others painted essentially for the bourgeoisie or the kings, and that was it! And to paint for these people is interesting, it makes you eat, of course... So you can pay your rent, you

can have wives, buying houses, having children and mistresses etc... But where's the part of freedom left? And is this really the way of the artist? I don't know... Are there true and essential artists? Are there fake artists? Who cares anyhow? We do what we want to do, that's it! Yes, thank you!

## **PART #2 / 3-5 | [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)**

### **THE END OF THE WORLDS**

- JPS: Let's start this part that you wanted to talk about, that you suggested me and what you wanted to name: "THE END OF THE WORLDS", on which we've already talked about a little, so we'll be discussing everything that's happening to us collectively nowadays. But firstly, I was thinking: what are the World and Society offering us today? We've already said it, but it is: Money, Pornography and the destruction of Nature (pollution)! On the other hand, paradoxically, a kind of sacred persists only thanks to 'money' and the 'golden calf' we've been talking about with Contemporary Art being one of the most striking example. But the SOUL has totally disappeared... And I wanted to quote two texts talking about this, because there's a very nice text by Maurice Maeterlinck titled *The awakening of the Soul, the treasure of the humble*, in which he says the following:

*THE AWAKENING OF THE SOUL, THE TREASURE OF THE HUMBLE,*  
MAURICE MAETERLINCK

"There really are centuries when the soul goes back to sleep and no one worries about it anymore. [...] On the other hand, there are perfect centuries where intelligence and beauty reign very purely, but where the soul does not show itself at all. Thus, it is very far from Greece and Rome and the French 17th and 18th centuries."

This is absolutely true and I totally share that sentiment.

"We don't know why, but something isn't there; secret communications are cut off, and beauty turns a blind eye. It's very difficult to put this into words and say why the atmosphere of divinity and fatality that surrounds Greek dramas doesn't resemble the true atmosphere of the soul."

And I have this very, very strong feeling, although unfortunately I've never had the opportunity to travel to Greece, a little to Italy; but it is true, that the soul has totally disappeared nowadays, whereas this soul, I felt it in Egypt, I felt it in Mexico or among the Mayas of Guatemala, where there



was something that was present, as he says: we don't know why, but among us in the West: "secret communications have disappeared". And, that's what I'm trying to recreate in my work, these 'secret communications', like rhizomes, a bit like the mycelia of mushrooms, which communicate with each other... And, in a way, this could be the primary, absolute and ultimate role of Art, somewhere.

- NB: Listening to you and thinking back to what we've exchanged on the question of the End of Worlds, we could come back to this expression, perhaps? Personally, I'd say that Jean-Pierre Sergent is the artist or the painter who, in a way, intends to rebuilt Worlds. In any case, to make up for the absence you've just mentioned, there's something missing today, and so this question of making up for absence, I think you raise it in your work and in what you say about it. Finally, as we were saying, there's a kind of ontological desire in your work; that is, the idea of remaking, even I don't know if we can, really, remake things, but to fully create a World (redistributing the cards) where relations to other Beings, Beings being understood in a very broad sense, to other Beings, in a way, that would be different from us, from this World, in which we are. For me, this is what your work is all about too: it is rebuilding, constructing, building another ontology of the relationship to Beings. I'd like to dwell on a few things that may surprise you, I don't know? I wanted to come back to the question of pornography, because it's a question that arises through your work; pornography, with this word that is ultimately a polysemic word too, it's also a word that is sometimes attributed to your work?

- JPS: Yes, that's true!

- NB: People sometimes say that your work is pornographic. I don't think that's quite the same sense in which you use it, but if we follow this idea, ultimately, of pornography, it also seems to me that we fall in a way on this question of absence or separation. In a way that pornography would be the representation of genitalia, of sexual scenes, without contexts in which they could make sense, is a kind of reduction, in a way, to something that would be of the order of, I don't know how to qualify it.... But a reduction, effectively to a single idea, existing, out of context as it were. And I'm thinking that when you use the word pornography to characterize the Contemporary World, it's not just in the sexual meaning of the term, it's in a more general way, can you elaborate a little on that?

- JPS: Well, yes, pornography has many facets, as does Violence, but I think we explored on that a little earlier. Yes, the destruction of the World (with all the images of wars and climatic disasters) is pornographic and of an infinite violence. But I don't want to go into it with too much details,

because I'd like to come back to the 'End of the Worlds'. As today we're the 'Last of the Mohicans', so to speak! And it's true. You know, when we were young, we used to dream about Native Americans people and so on... But practically all those numerous Tribes have disappeared. I didn't answer your question at all and I must apologise... But I'm going to quote a suitable text by Leconte de Lisle, which he wrote in 1872, where he describes the exact situation we're stuck in now, already written in his time period:

*TO THE MODERN, BARBARIC POEMS, LECONTE DE LISLE (1872)*

"You live cowardly, dreamless, purposeless lives,  
Older, more decrepit than the infertile earth,  
Castrated from the cradle by the murderous century  
Of every deep and vigorous passion."

He said that : *Castrated and from any deep and vigorous passion.*

"Your brains are as empty as your breasts,  
And you have stained this wretched World  
With blood so corrupted, with breath so unhealthy,  
That death alone germinates in this foul mud.  
Men, killers of Gods, the times are not far off  
When, on a great heap of gold wallowing in some corner,  
Having gnawed the nourishing soil down to the rocks,  
Knowing nothing of day or night,  
Drowned in the nothingness of supreme troubles,  
You will die foolishly filling money in your pockets."

Period! It's the right catastrophic situation in which we find ourselves now. It's the current bourgeoisie, it's the exact description of the bourgeoisie, or whatever the social class ultimately is (...nouveau riches etc.) It's the world we're in. People go out and buy Vuitton bags, Basquiat paintings or Hermes scarves, or whatever, maybe to escape their SIDERAL EMPTINESS of their 'deep being'. Personally, I don't meet any more deep beings anymore... There are no more people with a soul, as Maeterlinck used to say and even kindness had disappeared! I may be a bit harsh in my judgement, but for me, the soul has really disappeared, it's hidden away, somewhere; Will it reappear one day? Will we ever find it again? For me, that's the most important question, because the soul is the flame of the Human Being, and where is it hiding? Perhaps it can be found anew in Art? And I'd like to end this part with Black Elk, who is a great Sioux wise man, a medicine man, a Shaman, in an interview with John Neihardt in 1930 where he says:

## BLACK ELK SPEAK

"The hope of the Nation was broken and there was no center for the sacred tree to blossom again."

And my job is to present a few images of the sacred tree, because it's the *Axis Mundi*, where one can talk to the spirits. So, do I succeed or not? Are the spirits there? I don't know, but that's what I'm trying to do. This is a Large Paper, which is also present in a painting behind us, and this is an *Axis Mundi*, with aztec Sacred Trees, Butterflies and Dragonflies. The importance of insects in our World! And insects are the vectors of the souls of the dead. So, if we kill insects, where do the souls of the deads can go? It's a problem that seems absolutely ridiculous, but it's one we can ask ourselves all the same? Can the human soul survive in a completely sterilized, sanitized World? It may seem a silly question to ask. But the Tibetans believe that the soul is reincarnated... So if there are no more insects or animals, even though the little earthworms are disappearing, we're in trouble! Today, We are facing the problem of humanity's immortality, collectively surviving as a whole entity. No one gives a damn, no doubt, but it's a pertinent question, and one that comes from the very dawn of Humanity. Since prehistoric times, the dead were already buried with flowers, jewelries and weapons, so that they could survive in some other Worlds. And if the other Worlds no longer exist, we're castrated, we no longer have a spiritual existence... And even so, we can't even talk about spiritual existence anymore, but simply human material existence. And that's why, I use so many energy images, like the Mayan God of Lightning who recreates and regenerates the world. My work has to be lightning-fast, it has to strike and create a spark and regenerate the World, of course... And I'm fighting against the End of the World, the announced End of the Worlds. Can I do it or not? That's my artist's challenge, sort of!

- NB: Could we say there's a Jean-Pierre Sergent philosophy? An anthropology in the sense of a conception of the World and the conception of Human, of what Man fundamentally is?

- JPS: Well, Ginsberg had it too, Kerouac too, Rothko too. I think... some artists have this humanist vision and others don't have it at all, because they don't give a damn about the actual state of the World!

- NB: You didn't answer, really my question somehow.

- JPS: No, because I talk mainly about things that touch me and give me

hope.

- NB: Yes, but you, as an artist, you have a conception of the World and Humanity, you talk about the 'Soul'... You also have a certain conception of Time which is different...

- JPS: Exactly, yes, about the long and deep Time ...infinity and eternity.

- NB: Long Time, deep Time, but at the same time, with you, there are times of rupture too. For example in your artist's career, there are changing periods; between one part of your life to another (France, Montreal, New York etc.). The place, for you, in your discourse on energy too, which is there, which is extremely present. And so, it builds a kind of global conception, which we can see, maybe you wouldn't defend it or you don't recognize yourself in it, but it's a kind of global conception, a philosophy, your philosophy effectively, I think, which is there, present.

- JPS: Yes, you're right, yes, I am present in my work. Yes, I'm the one who does this work, quite modestly. But then, yes, that's what I am, that's what I do. I love being an artist. I think it's... That is exactly as in this book... you know, in C. G. Young's book, *Man and His Symbols*, where he said; it's a bit simplistic and cliché; but he described the four stages of Man's evolution: first there's the athlete, you know, there are several stages from the politician, and then, at the very end of the four stages, is Gandy, the wise man. In fact, I did a whole series of paintings in Montreal on this kind of spiritual evolution. I don't think one should stay in the same box all its life. And we can talk about spiritual progress and the awakening of the consciousness. I hope I'm more advanced today than I was before, or maybe I'm still the same person, but maybe also my artwork has enabled me to widen my circle of influence!

- NB: Agreed, but anyhow, I think it's a deeply philosophical painting!

- JPS: Ah, perhaps, yes!

## **PART #2 / 4-5 | [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)**

### **THE QUESTION & "PUSSIES, COCKS, ASSHOLES & EJACULATIONS"**

- JPS: Dear Noël, I believe you had a stupid question for me? So I'm waiting for your question in my retrenchment and I'm ready to answer it!

- NB: No, I don't think you have to be that entrenched to tell the truth, because it is indeed a question that may seem silly. I'd like to ask you: what has happened to your seventeen horses?

- JPS: Oh yes, well listen, that's a very kind question and one that really touches me. It's a bit like talking about my family. It's true that, to put things in perspective, I raised goats and horses on a farm in Charquemont, in the Haut-Doubs region (Jura Mountains), for over ten years. I'd gone to Montreal to visit my brother Alain in Ottawa, and an important gallery in Toronto wanted to work with me. The gallery owner, Jerry, had told me: "Jean-Pierre, I really want to work with you, but you have to come here and live in Canada!" I thought to myself, what the hell, that's quite a change, quite a big move... And then I thought to myself, maybe this was my chance. So I did sent out letters to all my customers, because I'd been in this business for about ten years. I had quite a few customers, and back then we didn't have the Internet... I put a 25% discount on my entire herd, and customers came from all over France to buy my horses... They were truly beautiful American horses, Appaloosas and Quarter Horses, directly imported from the US, horses for American riding, and of course, when I saw the last horse going away... It was very, very hard and terrible. And what's quite strange is that they come back often, more before, in New York than here; but they come back often in my dreams. Because when you spend 24 hours a day with living beings, you develop a kind of love somehow. And rightly, our bodies interact with each other and, somehow, their spirits and presence are interacting also with you too. Even if sometimes it was also some big fights, like with my stallion, often it's a battle. And it's a very physical relationship. And I think that this very physical relationship that I had when I was breeding horses, because I was all alone to look after seventeen horses, so inevitably I had to take responsibility, because if you don't take responsibility, things go to hell: the mares aren't covered, the stallion breaks everything, etc... You have to be in charge. So, my body was present within this herd, I went to feed them once or twice a day and I learned to be responsible, precisely, for other living beings. You know about the Tibetans, when people die, they cut up the corpse into pieces and feed them to the vultures... Well, somehow I didn't do that, but I was there every day with my horses. And I miss them dearly. So they were sold and I found out, much later that there were descendants of my breeding.

- NB: Okay, and in your artist's career, you mention it, which is why, apart from the obvious interest, I wanted to know what had become of your horses? It's perhaps not a completely trivial question, to tell the truth, but it's this idea you've just developed, that this relationship with your herd of

horses, I don't know if that's the right word, but had introduced you to, in any case, makes you capable of other forms of attention towards Life and Vitality. And then, this contact with animal, of course, with such special beings. And; this issue also reappeared, at some point, into your painting, because you mention it somewhere: that there's a kind of deep connection between what you're painting in the material itself and what actually results from the birth of a foal, namely the placenta (the delivery), which remains, as it were!

- JPS: Absolutely, yes, in the patterns, precisely in the patterns I use, they're repetitive motifs and are de facto a web of Life. It's true that it was always me who delivered the mares, in fact, they delivered themselves perfectly well, and thereafter, I gave the placenta to my dogs to eat. And by touching this placenta, which is somehow, warm, viscous and full of blood, you're touching Life itself. And by analogy, we can go back for example to the sacrifices of the Mayas... I could say that I touched Life, like all obstetricians or midwives, I touched Life with my fingers and I've never forgotten it. That is a true experience, and maybe that's why my sexuality or my relationship with sex are a little more open minded, because when you've touched Life so closely, yes, you're no longer a virgin to what's happening to you physically speaking. It's a kind of physical, corporal and metaphysical depucellation. Of the same spiritual level, no doubt, that just as when people have touched death or other similar experiences. Yes, that is a very deep lived experience.

- NB: Perfect! So, that was my stupid question!

- JPS: Yes, so let's move on to the last part of our interview, because what we're going to do later on, is to present a dozen art-prints I completed last year, and I've called this part "CUNTS, COCKS, ASSHOLES & EJACULATIONS" It's an introduction to my current erotic and tantric work; the: "*Karma-Kali, Sexual Dreams & Paradoxes*" series from 2022... Because my work is somehow governed by both, chaos and freedom, and I was thinking about this the day before yesterday, because I absolutely refuse to be domesticated and I really want to remain wild and savage. As a reference, I quote John Huston's film *The Misfits* with Marilyn Monroe and Clark Gable, in which they go out to find and capture the last wild mustangs to sell them just for meat, and Marilyn is so shocked by this, she begs the two men to set them free at the end. It's all this macho type, Clark Gable, trying to catch the last free stallion with his lasso and so on... And it's all that struggle between Wild and Domesticated Life; between: are we going to be turned into corned beef? Or will we be able to live and survive freely, and remain wild and untouched? And that is a legitimate question! To support this view, yesterday, I came across a passage from a

book called *Asia Phantom* by Ferdinand Ossendowsky, who travelled in Siberia, and he stats, about captured animals who want to be free again, precisely the following things:

*PRISON GAME IN FULL FLIGHT, ASIA PHANTOM, FERDINAND OSSENDOWSKY*

"It's impossible to tame partridges or capercaillies. They live in captivity, but always think of freedom."

I think it's also part of the artist's role to always be thinking about freedom!

"A puff of wind from the forest or meadow, a cry from a free bird, and immediately it finds a way to escape, even at the risk of its life. Freedom, sir, is a great thing, and only man can fail to understand it."

So, that's a bit of that. I have to find my freedom through and thanks to my art work.

- NB: But aren't we already domesticated?

- JPS: Yes, but of course, we live in a society, so we're not going to kill each other, obviously. Yes, of course, social manner is important too... Yes, but I think that, deep down, the artist is always looking for that true oversized (absolute, uncompromising freedom) a bit like Bukowski, you know? Things that go beyond limits. I think it's important to try and find that. Yes, yes, beyond the limits... And then afterwards, when these people die; they're praised for having done that (opened ways) but when they're alive, one can't say they're very accepted or supported. That's a true thing to say too. But there's also a question about the 'DIRTINESS OF THE WORLD'. I don't want to make too many citations, but there was a quote from a Jean-Luc Godard's movie, in which, Jacques Bonaffé, the actor, who puts his hand into the bushy sex of Maruschka Detmers, in Godard's film *First name Carmen*, he says, "Oh, that's disgustingly dirty!" And she responds appropriately and in an innocent way; it's a Godard line, of course: "It's not us who are dirty, it's the World!" You see, I think I totally disassociate myself from some moral thinking, because an artist shouldn't have a moral, but an ethics, yes of course. And morality, or at least this bourgeois morality, should not interfere with my Art!

- NB: But no one should have morals, should they? There's this relationship between ethics and morality, which can be partly distinguished from their points of emission (religion, bourgeoisie,

propriety etc.).

- JPS: Yes, absolutely, yes.

- NB: So, this is what's really at stake and the question you raise is also about transgression. Roughly speaking, how, because we live in society, do we play with the rules and, while playing with the rules, we can manage to go way beyond them?

- JPS: Yes, of course, it's transgression, of course, you have to be transgressive. But one can't be too provocative either. We don't know, we don't really know what scale to play on and at what level? I don't know? In a way, I'm not too provocative, but I do like to show things that seem important to me. Yes, I also wanted to talk about Tantrism, because we're going to be presenting some of my work, and what I wanted to say about Tantrism is that I wrote about it:

"There is in Tantrism and in certain artists works like Tarkovsky, Pasolini and Sade or Antonin Artaud, as well, as quite modestly in my work, moreover; this inflexible will to put the body back in its rightful place... In its true human greatness, with and thanks to it and its own regenerative, seminal and intrinsically intelligent energies..."

In other words, people are often sick and with a lot of illness, but you have to trust the body, because it's an INFINITE INTELLIGENCE, much more of what we think, it's incredible what goes on in the body's machine, and you have to trust him blindly!

It's really incredible what goes on in the body's machine, and you have to trust it completely!

"To set the record straight, no longer in certain religious, moral, aesthetic (even artistic) and dogmatic spaces that are several thousand years old; but in a truly immediate, present and corporeal dimension of the machine for shitting and fucking; to also, in this way, reintegrate a kind of fury for living that is so essential, so forgotten and so reviled these days... But so vital and so enjoyable nonetheless!" JPS, *Notes from Besançon 2023*

I think it's thrilling and ecstatic to be well in sexuality and in Art and in color. It's an enjoyment of the World, yes, that's it!

- NB: Okay.

- JPS: All right, so let's present you a few art prints now...



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

### THE "KARMA-KALI, SEXUAL DREAMS & PARADOXES" SERIES (2022)

- JPS: Yes, I wanted to show you some of the works we chose together the last time you came to the studio. This is my latest series of "*Karma-Kali, Sexual Dreams & Paradoxes*" and here we are, showing them one by one, like this... So, I work mainly by superimposition, if you like, and I stop when it seems to me that something is happening, and then afterwards, I sometimes put a layer of coloured Indian ink on top, and here we see a deer with energy lines.

- NB: Can you say a few words about the choice of color here?

- JPS: Yes, it's quite a bloody color, it's blood, it's Life! Yes, yes, of course. But we were talking earlier about the deliverance of horses, and that's what it's all about. We feel we're really in... we're not really in the womb, but we're in the World Matrix, somewhere... with the animals. It's a bit of a distant reference to prehistoric caves.

- NB: With the choice of the deer... And with the different layers of paint you accumulate, is this also a way of working that you have?

- JPS: Yes, yes, that I found; you know, last time we talked about the millennia-old finger tracings layering in the Pech Merle Cave. So I wanted to use the same layering technique, to get rid of the idea altogether of an individual (uninteresting) image and go into something more collective, precisely. For example, there's Isis, the Egyptian goddess behind it, and I like this confrontation of worlds and images... I think you really liked this blue print?

- NB: This blue, absolutely yes!

- JPS: This one is an erotic image too...

- NB: Can you say a few words about the choice of blue, which is also quite an impressive blue?

- JPS: Yes, you know, I'd have to say that my references to blues are mainly to Egyptian tombs (as well as the superb Mayan blues), because

almost all the ceilings are painted with this kind of star pattern, which repeats itself ad infinitum. And of course, this is the place where the unconscious can develop, in the infinite and in the night. Because we find it hard to... the unconscious and ultimate consciousness, we find it hard to be conscious in a daytime World, with the Sun. Only the Aztecs and the Sioux, etc., are capable of being conscious under the Sun, but that's to access the unfathomable depth of intimacy. Of course, you could also say that this work is an erotic dream, yes. It's something to do with dreaming... And also with the fascination of the erotic scene! And, of course, also with transgression...

- NB: And transgression, meaning that we're not anymore into the idea of representation?

- JPS: Yes, absolutely! And as you see, I sometimes add texts like that, which are a little obscene. Precisely, to shake up the audience a bit and maybe make them laugh or not. It's difficult, because people don't react at all, no matter what you do (they're anaesthetised, brain-dead), you're trying!

- NB: And what reaction would you really expect from the spectator or viewer?

- JPS: I'd like them to smile and say: "Well, that's funny, that's interesting!" Or you know: "Yes! It's beautiful! the colors, the light, it's superb... Yes, it speaks to me, it moves me, it nourishes me in some way!" But that's a bit of a vain hope. I think my work doesn't 'fit', it doesn't correspond at all to French mentality, neither to the French Cartesian spirit. Perhaps in other countries, it would be better appreciated as people here, are self-cryogenically frozen by their own stupidity! This one's a little less obvious under this light, but the tones are rusty, like this. They're always women with big phalluses, and ejaculations, there's always, anyhow, I always try to integrate the image into what's called the 'pattern' (repetitive motif), almost every time. Because I pick these up from Japanese manga comics, I take all these drawings that aren't very important but that fill up the space, to create, as we said earlier, the idea of this deliverance (tangle of nourishing blood vessels), this pattern of life somewhere.

- NB: But on an image like that, on a work like that, the viewer's reaction can be extremely negative?

- JPS: Oh yes, absolutely! For example, I had a small exhibition at the Besançon Fine-Arts Museum titled "Eros Unlimited", and quite a few

people working at the museum said I was doing pornographic work. We all have different relationships toward sexuality, of course. After that, you can't hold it against people. It's a fact of life in the art world and it's the reality of the artist's tough job, that people don't necessarily like their work, yes! As long as they don't burn it. And to tell you an anecdote, I had an exhibition in Basel in Switzerland, in the Jewish quarter, and the gallery owner put blankets in front of his shop window so as not to shock passers-by and not alert the police...

- NB: Yes, that reminds me of something. I think we had the same problem, not with the painting of *The Origin of the World* (Gustave Courbet, 1866); we know that it was indeed, sometimes, invisibilized, but with a book on this painting of *The Origin of the World* which, I believe, suffered the same fate as what you've just mentioned, effectively...

- JPS: But those who ask such moral questions don't understand that I'm talking, above all, about women's sexual freedom. You understand, it's absolutely not a humiliation, not at all. Incidentally, I'm in contact with an Iranian artist friend who really likes and respects my work. And when, here or elsewhere, people make remarks like this: why don't you go and live in Iran, where you won't see any erotic images and you'll have to cover your hair... I think I'm doing work that is more fundamentally liberating, I hope; after that, you never know how a piece of work might be received or really perceived? And here, too, it's an image of bondage.

- NB: Yes.

- JPS: Which is perhaps a bit like a vestal virgin, a bit Greco-Roman. I have to admit that, having a good knowledge of Art, occasionally, certain images make me think of Greek or Egyptian or other statues... So, of course, sometimes, there are references to the classical History of Art.

- NB: Yes

- JPS: Here, one can think of caryatids, it's a reference and after what I do with it, it's a caryatid that's alive. Caryatids died in and within Antiquity... I strongly believe that pleasure and sexuality need to be shown in Art much more than they are now, otherwise we're cutting ourselves off from part of our humanity.

- NB: With regard to what you've just said about the need to show eroticism... What do you attribute the fact that this part of life, roughly speaking, is disappearing or not present and exhibited? You think it's a kind of censorship? Self-censorship on the part of the artists?

- JPS: No, it's religions and morals that get in the way. (despite the difficulties of selling erotic art). And no, it's not self-censorship. A lot of artists, like Rubens, painted their "Leda and the Swan" version, because they couldn't paint the male or even neither the female sex organs. So they always used ersatz are intended to show IT, but it's not really THAT (SEX)! It's like Magritte's "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*". There's always this ambiguity in and with the erotic image, which is always truncated into Western Art and paintings. We sometimes want to show sensuality or sexuality, but we can't really, and we never go all the way with sensuality into orgasm (except religious: spiritual ecstasy, so it's: *coitus interruptus!*). And my work is really about going to the deep meaning of things. Yes, in a way, I feel close to painters who went to to the bottom of things like Soutine, de Dekooning or we come back to Pollock, although he didn't do much figuration but he created 'ejaculatory spaces' in the same way. Here, one can feel a kind of cosmic harmony in my print, somehow.

- NB: Yes, yes.

- JPS: And what do we have here? We've just got a vulva with patterns. I can't remember what culture they're from, maybe Brazil? I always like to find drawings made on pottery or basketry, because it's mainly some works completed by women and often, women have a precise idea of the organization of the World and the Cosmos that, unlike, men don't have. It's quite strange, and so I want to show the organization of the World with a vulva that's also like a matrix.

- NB: Which, I think, is rather interesting to say, because it's a work that could be, roughly speaking, judged; I don't know how to put it? Which, in any case, would not respect the feminine condition, to put it like that; while at the same time, there's the fact of having, effectively, put motifs that come from works made by women and with what you're talking about, on the question of women's mastery of a cosmic vision of the World. The question that undoubtedly arises, that is to say, we may be coming back to a discussion we've already had, but it's this: what would viewers need in order for deeply and fully understand your work, so to speak?

- JPS: They'd have to have had all my experiences, as we've already discussed... I think; or they'd have to have themselves some interest in Art! Or, let's say that, for example, someone who'd been to live among the Pygmies, would probably have no trouble seeing and understanding it. I think, but maybe I'm wrong, I imagine, I allow myself to imagine, maybe that's it? One have obviously to get out of its moral and cultural prison confinement, in order to be able to apprehend completely my work.

Because if you look at it as Courbet's vulva, you've understood absolutely nothing about my work: it's something totally different and almost conceptually at the opposite extreme!

- NB: In other words, we were talking about the end of the Worlds. But this work is between several worlds?

- JPS: Absolutely, yes, that's true! Reactivating, reinitializing several Worlds, reacting things. And then there's this last painting we chose together.

- NB: Yes.

- JPS: And here, it's the same thing, it's a pattern. There's this geometric pattern and this other one that comes from, I can't remember, but maybe Oceania? Like this... It's important to understand that all these gathered drawings, which we don't understand and which we think are purely decorative, had a meaning at a time, no doubt genetical. Perhaps they represented ancestral lineages, I don't know, but I'm taking the freedom of reusing them in this way. Firstly, it's aesthetically beautiful, it speaks to me and I've re-drawn it myself by hand with black Indian ink on the film, just like that. It's a way of reappropriating the mood, or spiritual state of the person (artist or shaman) in which he or she drew it. It can be a woman or a man, it doesn't matter. And there was a very interesting book by Ismaël Kadaré: *The File on H*, in which he recounted how certain scientists had been able, it was his hypothesis, to record the songs that potters sang in Homeric times. So, these scientists thought that the traces left when the pots were made were like microgrooves on a record, and that they could listen again to the Homeric songs by "reading" these archaic potteries? So, it's a beautiful book. And I'm kind of doing the same thing myself... I want to sing Homeric songs again, or even others epics...

- NB: Yes, there too, when it comes to working with colors, as you add colors, yes: we're on blue, red, we're on black and brown. Finally, how do you order your choice of color, what are your processes?

- JPS: When I'm printing (silk-screening), as I said, I feel centred, I'm there and I think of this color and I use it. On the other hand, I never use a pure color, I always making it dirty. People often say that colors have to be pure! No, no, not at all... My colors are always to be off, they had their lives. You see, on my shelf, there are paint pots, some of which date back to my New York years, so that's over 20 years ago. It's a bit like a sourdough, if you like, that bakers keep. There are, for example, sourdoughs that are over hundred years old! So it's the same with my

colors. Each time, I add another blue, for example, and then I mix it. These pigments have a history. I don't take it straight from the jar, and it's always very nuanced. But the shade has to be exact. There's just one little problem, because I work with acrylic paint; it's a little technical problem, which is that fresh acrylic is lighter and darkens as it dries by at least two shades, compared with oil, but that's not really important. So, would you like to add or mention anything else?

- NB: No, I think we've got covered a lot about your Art, it seems. I can't think of anything else.

- JPS: Well then, I'll end with two quotes and recommend everyone to read the wonderful book: *The Mirror of Simple Souls* by Marguerite Porete, who was a thirteenth-century mystic and who was burnt because she had written this very book, which we could have talked about for hours. But I just want to quote one of her sentences. She says, in *chapter 134*: "*Perfect freedom knows no 'why'.*" In other words, it's THERE. That's what's going on in my work too. And then, going back to Artaud, since we were talking about Artaud: "*Those who say there is no God have forgotten the heart.*" It's a beautiful sentence. I'm not at all religious, but I do think there's a spiritual dimension that we need to develop, honor and respect. Here we are, dear Noël... Thank you very much for this wonderful interview, thank you to Lionel who was behind the cameras and see you next time, as we say in New York! See you soon and goodbye...