



272 pp.  
150 colour illustrations  
hardcover  
French language  
ISBN 978-88-7439-845-4  
€ 39,00

## TRAVERSER LA LUMIÈRE

FLORIAN RODARI

The six painters brought together in this catalogue—Jean Bazaine, Roger Bissière, Elvire Jan, Jean Le Moal, Alfred Manessier, and Gustave Singier—never actually formed a cohesive group as such, as were the Impressionists, Futurists, or Surrealists, for example. They never claimed to share a common aesthetic position and they never published any manifesto stating their aims. They were basically just friends: they hung around together, often spending holidays together and worked in close contact with one another.

After 1945, free of the influences of Cubism and Surrealism, they did in fact find themselves all on the same trajectory: the search for a strictly non-figurative path between representational and purely abstract art. Underlying this stance was the need to find a means of expressing the emotions aroused by natural phenomena, especially the play of light, which each artist according to his own sensibility tried to render as movement, shaft-like effects, reflections, and translucencies. During the four decades after World War II, in most cases interest in their works began to wane in the face of the growing success of American painting, to the point of being unjustly overlooked by critics and museums alike. The time has come to rediscover them.

Most of the artworks in the catalogue come from a Swiss collection carefully built up by a discerning art enthusiast, who fell in love with the work of these artists at an early stage in their careers. The exhibition associated with this catalogue includes around a hundred works, some of which are extremely large. This is a travelling exhibition and will be held at the Musée Granet in Aix-en-Provence, the Kunstmuseum-Picasso in Münster, and the Musée La Piscine in Roubaix, between autumn 2018 and winter 2020.

**Florian Rodari** has both a literary and art historical background. Following seven years at the Cabinet des Estampes in Geneva, he was appointed director of Musée de l'Élysée in Lausanne from 1979 to 1983. He is now an independent exhibition organizer and collaborates with museums in Switzerland and throughout the world. He is the author of numerous publications and has gathered his writings on etching into a single book, *L'univers comme alphabet* (Gallimard, 2014).

**Natalie Adamson** graduated from the University of Melbourne and is now reader in the Faculty of Art History at St Andrews University (Scotland). Her research focuses on twentieth-century European art, French painting in the post-1945 period in particular. Her main publications are: *Painting, Politics and the Struggle for the École de Paris, 1944–1964* (2009); *Academics, Pompiers, Official Artists and the Arrière-Garde: Defining Modern and Traditional in France, 1900–1960*, in collaboration with Toby Norris (2009); *Material Imagination: Postwar European Art, 1946–1971*, edited with Steven Harris (2016).

**Mailis Favre** graduated in the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Geneva, where she is studying for a PhD with a research project on “Le Corbusier et l'exposition.” She was in charge of conservation at the Centre Pompidou/Musée national d'Art moderne - Centre de



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création industrielle from 2013 to 2016 and was assistant organizer of the *Le Corbusier, Mesures de l'homme* exhibition (2015). She also helped organize various exhibitions in Switzerland and France. She is currently involved in research on non-figurative glass art in collaboration with the Jean and Suzanne Planque Foundation.

**Alain Madeleine-Perdrillat** was born in Paris, where he still lives and has long worked for Réunion des Musées Nationaux and the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art. He is the author of a work on Seurat (Skira) and another on Nicolas de Staël (éditions Hazan). He has written numerous essays on modern and contemporary painting for specialist magazines and a similar number on twentieth-century writers, such as Marcel Proust, Giorgio Bassani, and Philippe Jaccottet.