

# Christian Bonnefoi

*Diagram*

Friday, April 17th — Saturday, May 30th, 2026

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**Galerie Poggi is pleased to present the second solo exhibition by Christian Bonnefoi (b. 1948), titled “Diagram,” featuring a representative selection of works from his major series dating back to the 1970s.**


**The title refers to the diagram initiated by the artist in 1994, both a method and a work, which organizes his practice as a dynamic network of series. A true conceptual matrix, this framework connects the works to one another beyond techniques and periods, beyond formal registers, forming a constellation where each pictorial state carries within it the seeds of its future developments**





**Through a selection of series such as *Babel, P.L.*, and *Dos*, the exhibition highlights a body of work centered on the depth and stratification of the pictorial plane.**

**Through the interplay of collage, superimposition, and transparency, Christian Bonnefoi disrupts the relationships between surface and background, front and back, overturning the traditional conventions of painting. “Diagram” invites us to view the work as a process in perpetual flux, an open space for experimentation.**



**“MY WORK DEVELOPS MORE  
AS A CONSTELLATION THAN  
IN A LINEAR FORM. IT IS A  
BODY OF WORK THAT IS  
NEVER FINISHED,  
BUT ALWAYS OPEN.”**

Christian Bonnefoi

# Works on view

## Selection



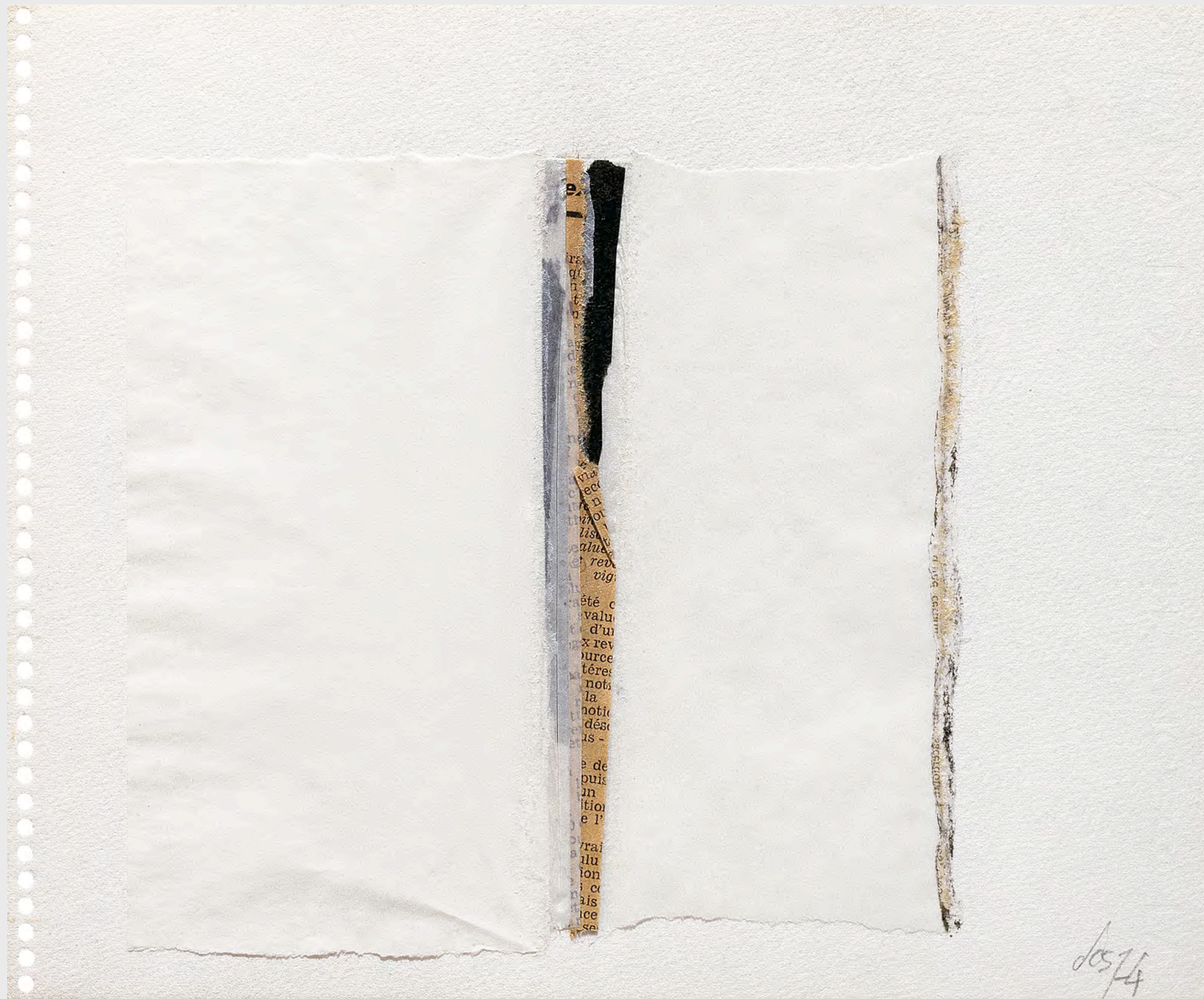
## ***Occasion*, series, 1974**

With the *Occasion* series, Christian Bonnefoi began his painting practice in 1974 through a group of drawing-collages. The title, derived from the Latin “occasio” (opportune moment), evokes a decisive choice: to use painting as a mode of thought and a way of life.

In this body of work, Bonnefoi develops a metonymic approach to collage, focused on its structural function rather than a narrative one. The aim is to occupy the interstice between two surfaces, creating a stratified thickness in which each layer retains its autonomy.

**Christian Bonnefoi**  
*Occasion*, 1974

Collage made from tissue paper and newspaper  
19 x 23 cm





## ***Dos*, series, 1974 - 2026**

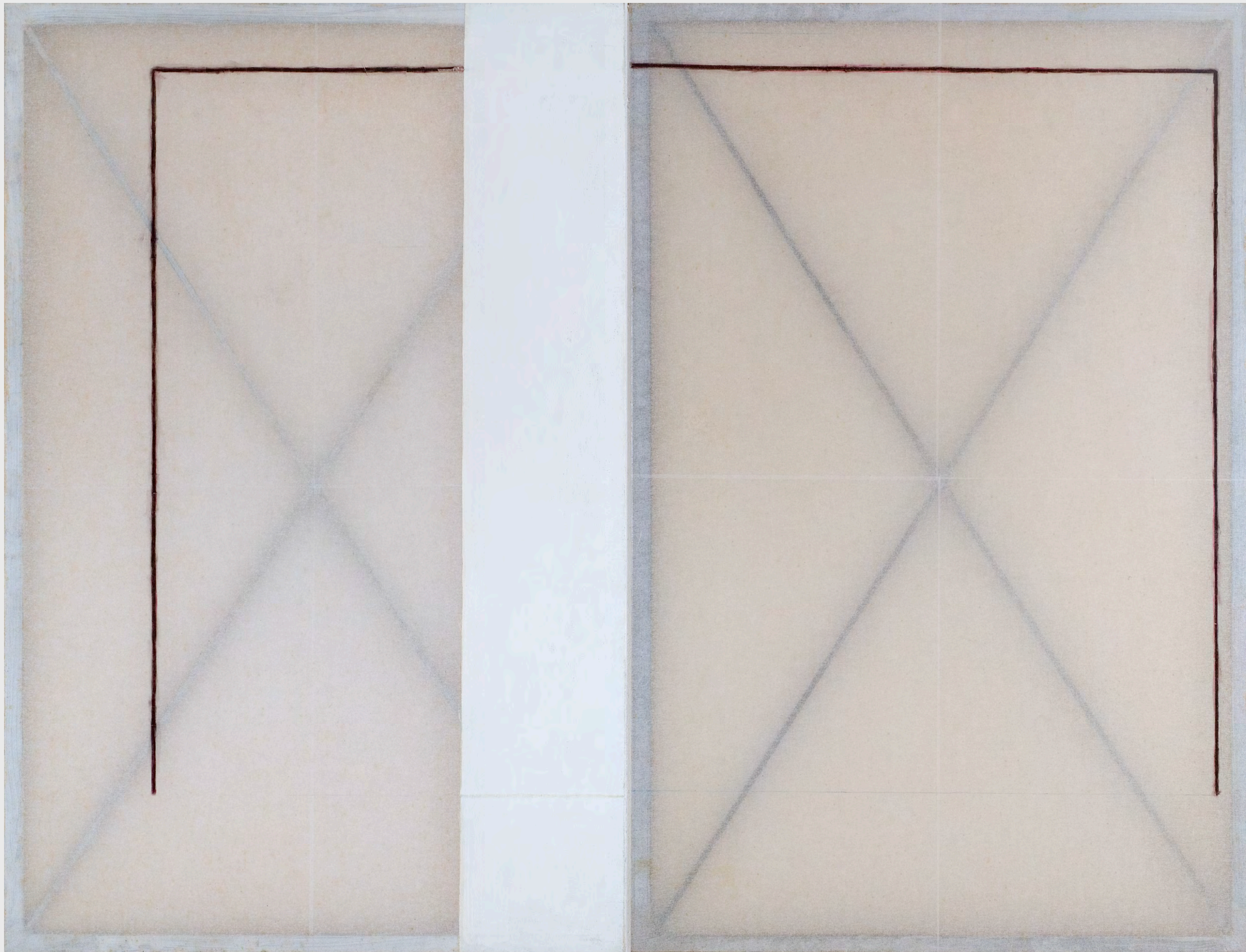
The *Dos* series finds its origin in the admiration of Matisse's four backs, exhibited at the Grand Palais in Paris in 1970. These sculptures broke with the tradition of frontal representation, making the back of the body the primary subject. As early as 1974, Bonnefoi created his first *Dos* and *Occasion* collages, drawing directly on these works to explore the interplay between front and back. This motif became the starting point for a reflection on the pictorial surface that structures his entire artistic approach.

**Christian Bonnefoi**

*Dos "2011-2012"*, 2011-2012

Acrylic, collage on tissue paper  
230 x 165 cm





## ***Hyperion, series*** **1977 - 2026**

As early as 1976, Bonnefoi named the site of the work *Hyperion*, “that which grows beneath”. *Hyperion* is the pictorial surface, distinct from the actual surface of the support.

This surface is formed through the stratification of various elements, creating an almost sculptural drawing in which a sense of volume and depth – purely material– can be perceived. This approach, which he continued with the *Ja na pa* series until 2001, plays with transparency, lightness, and the texture of materials such as glue and tissue paper. The line becomes a minimal motif that defines the territory of the work : a surface of appearance shaped by successive interventions.

**Christian Bonnefoi**  
*Hyperion II, 1977*

Diptyque  
Toile tarlatane, acrylique, graphite, châssis métallique  
200 x 260 cm

## ***Ja na pa, series, 1978 - 1979***

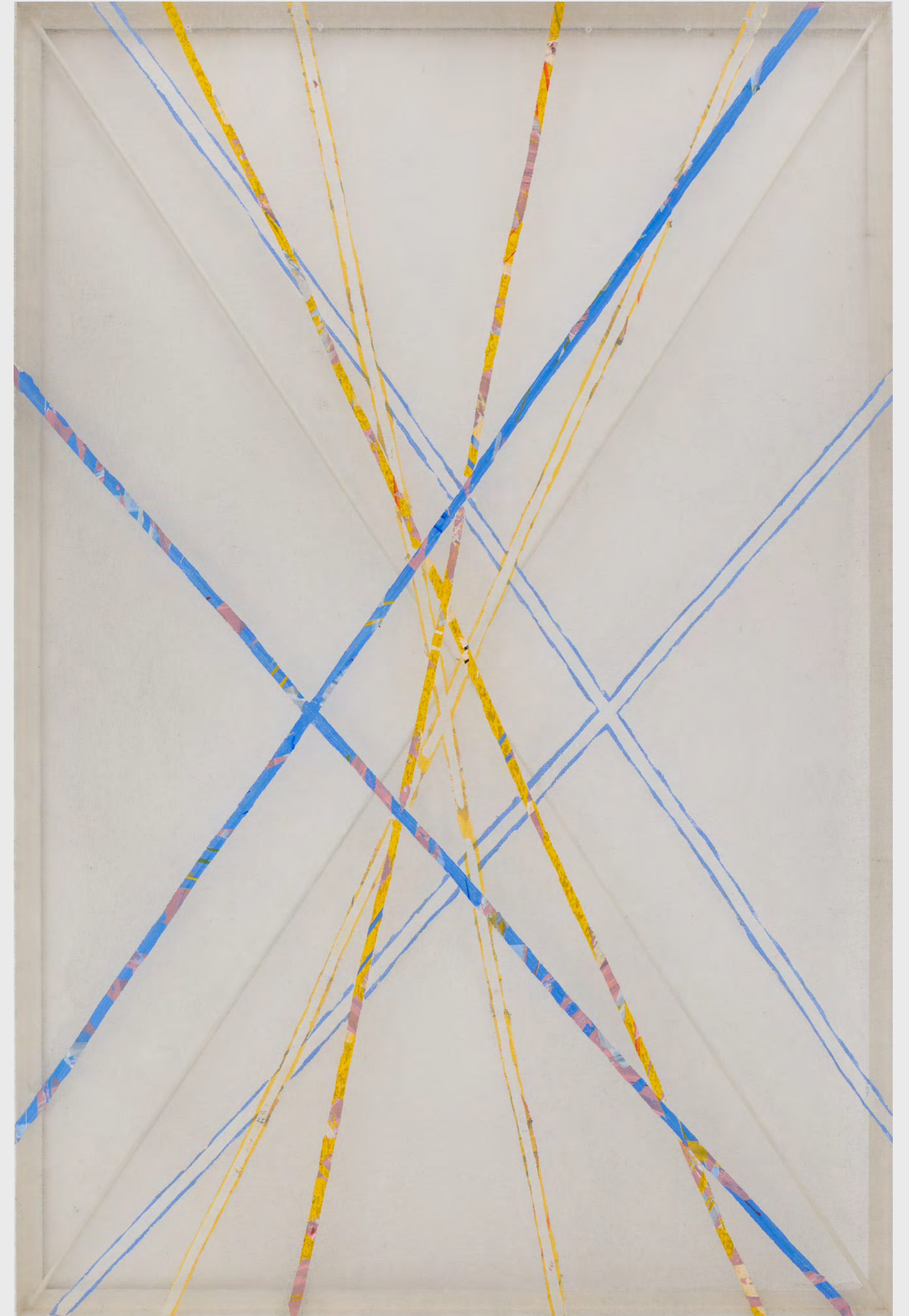
Between 1978 and 1979, Christian Bonnefoi explored the three-dimensionality of the painting by layering tarlatan and a metal stretcher for *Ja na pa I, II, and III*. The pigment – applied in lines, flat areas, or drips – interacts with the geometric structure of the stretcher (the rectangular frame and the diagonals of the Saint Andrew’s cross), while the transparency of the tarlatan reveals the thickness of the work. Here, Bonnefoi examines the surface as an object, in contrast to the deconstructive approaches of the time (such as the Supports/Surfaces or BMPT movements).

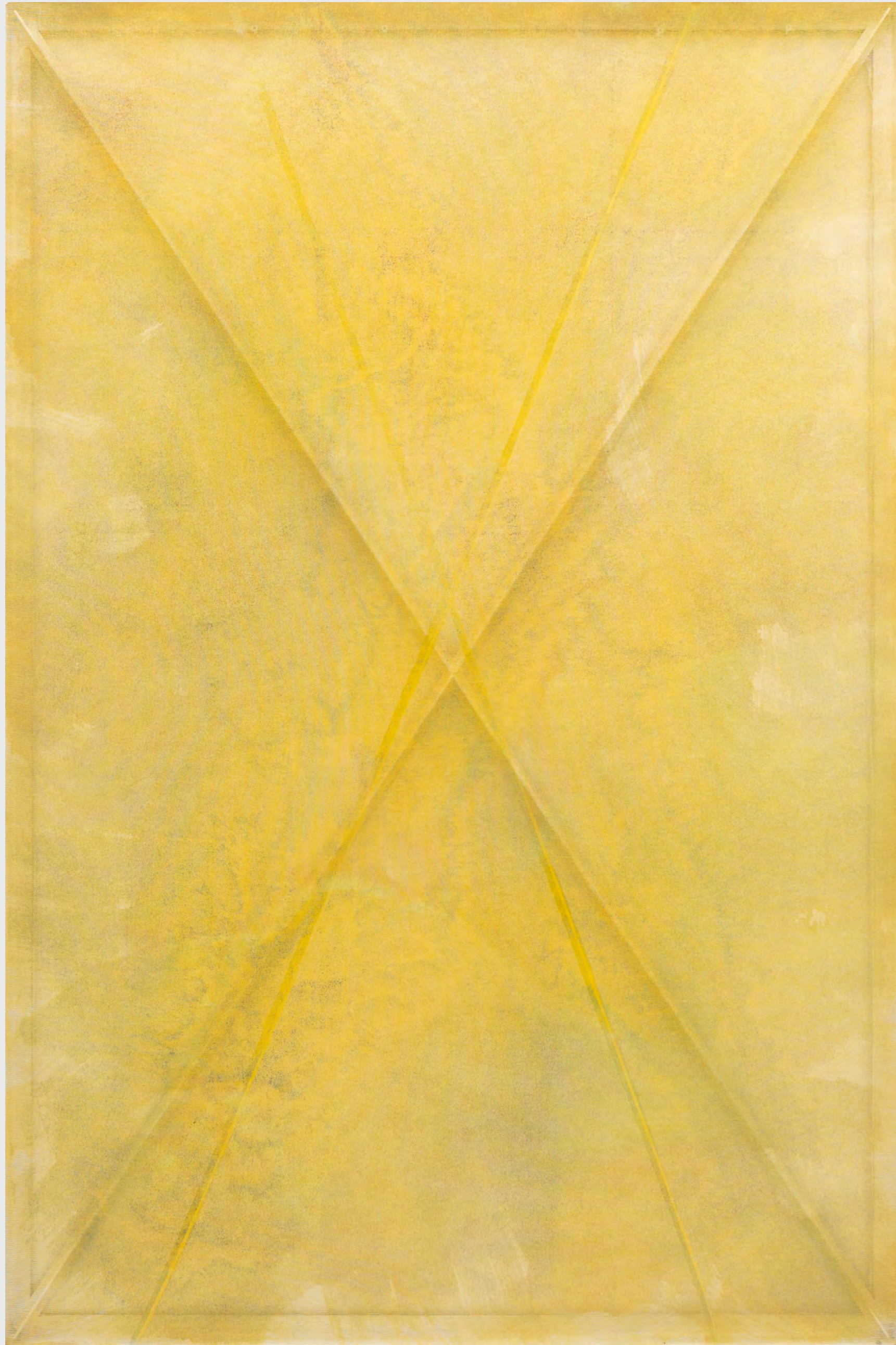
In 2019, he created a Remake of three works from the series: a kind of return through time, an “injection of the present into the past”, extending – through the lens of 40 years of experience – this reflection on space and the materiality of painting.

**Christian Bonnefoi**

*Ja na pa IV - R, 2016 - 1978*

Acrylic on canvas and metal stretcher  
193 x 130 cm





**Christian Bonnefoi**

*Ja na pa IV - R*, 2016 - 1978

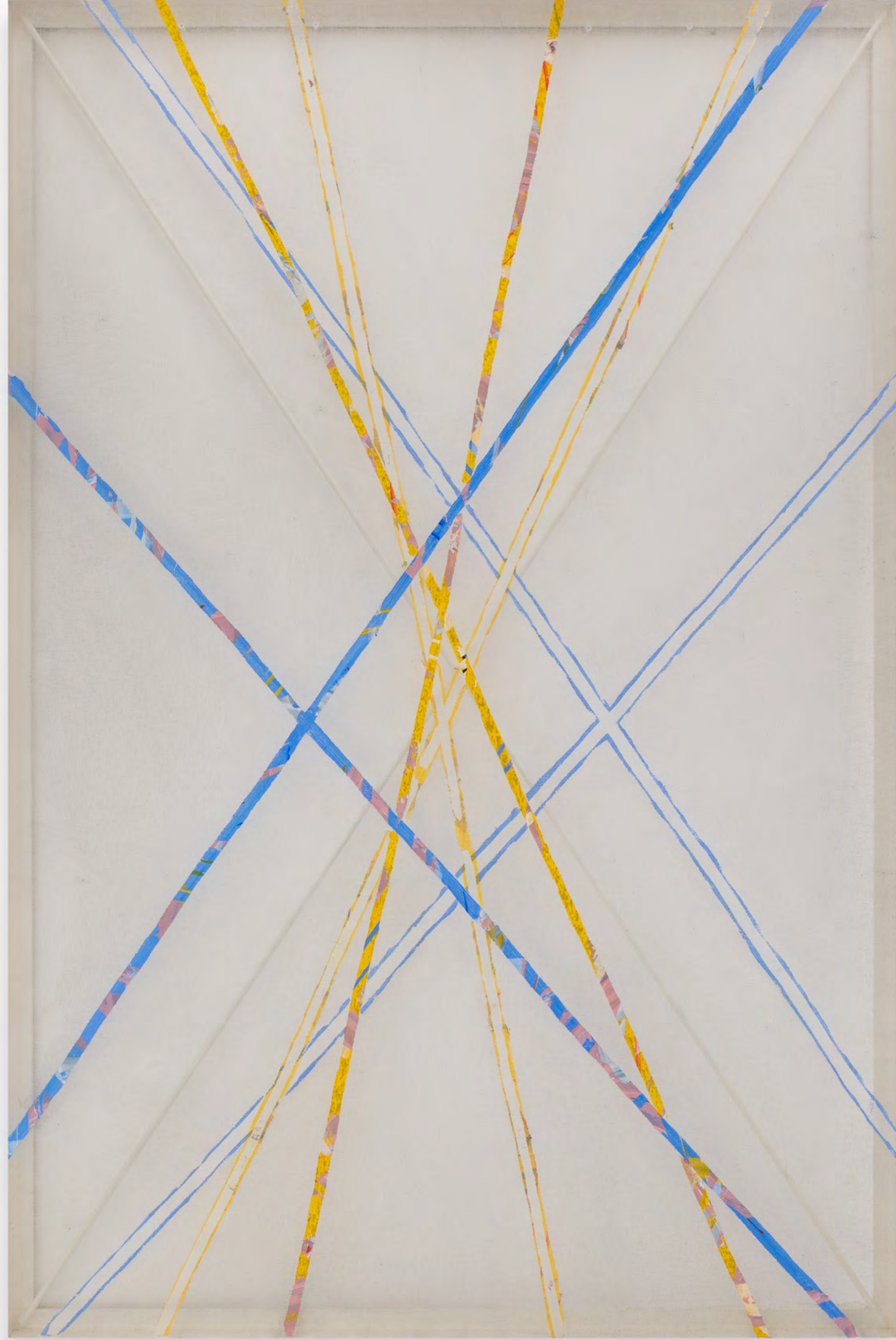
Acrylic on canvas and metal stretcher  
193 x 130 cm



**Christian Bonnefoi**

*Ja na pa IV - R*, 2016 - 1978

Acrylic on canvas and metal stretcher  
193 x 130 cm



## ***Babel*, series, 1978 - 2026**

The first *Babel* works appeared in 1978 and have since formed the backbone of Bonnefoi's entire body of work. This series of paintings (23 to date) evolves with each iteration through technical and formal modifications, while consistently maintaining the use of white paint and anthracite-gray graphite.

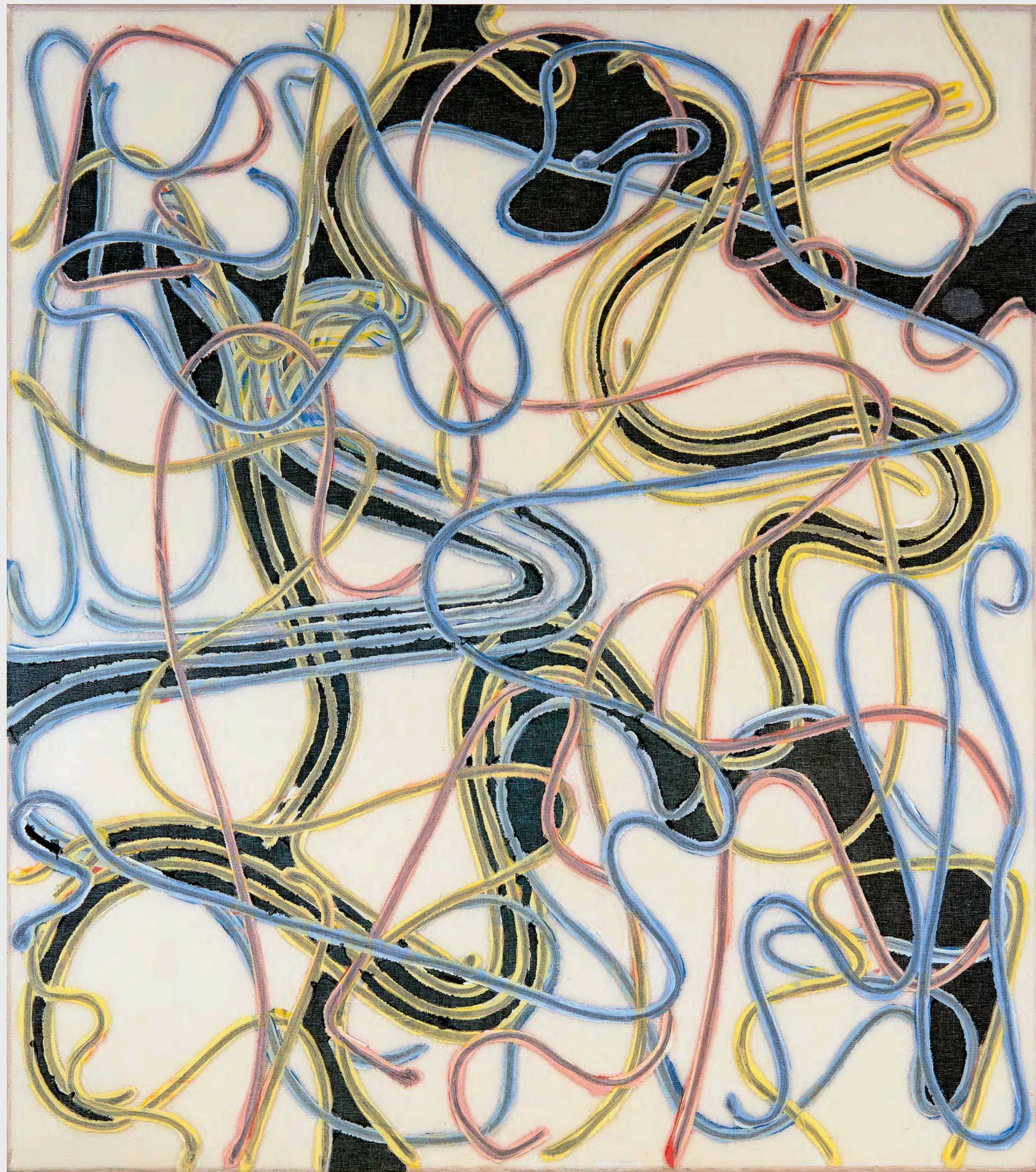
What is visible on the surface has in fact been painted on the reverse side of the tarlatan canvas stretched over a frame. To achieve this, Bonnefoi begins with plastic matrices, from which he lifts fragments with glue to transfer them onto the canvas. What is thus presented to us appears as a kind of "rewinding" of gestures and processes – of division and collage – of acrylic paint mixed with graphite across the surface.

**Christian Bonnefoi**

*Babel XV*, 1999-2000

Canvas, acrylic, graphite  
160 x 180 cm





**Christian Bonnefoi**

*Babel XVI, "Dogon", 1999*

Graphite and acrylic on canvas  
180 x 160 cm

**Christian Bonnefoi**

*Babel XVII*, 2002

Graphite and acrylic on canvas  
160 x 130 cm





**Christian Bonnefoi**

*Babel IX*, 1995

Acrylic on canvas  
160 x 130 cm

**Christian Bonnefoi**  
*Babel I, 90° de la Sphère, 1978*

Acrylic on canvas  
200 x 130 cm





## ***Machine - R, series, 2016 - 1978***

The *Machines* are small-scale works that Bonnefoi produces alongside his other pieces, almost like prototypes or tests. They extend the functions of the sketch : not only do they prepare or verify the process (like a productive machine), but once a form is achieved, they also detach from it to reveal moments that were forgotten, abandoned, or rejected in the final work. In this way, the Machine acts as a revealer of the creative process.

**Christian Bonnefoi**

*Machine - R, 2016 - 1978*

Collage, acrylic on canvas  
30 x 30 cm

## ***PL*, series, 1988 - 2026**

The *P.L.* (*Puissance Lumière*) series, initiated in 1988, constitutes another line of exploration in Bonnefoi's work, focusing on the relationships between the pictorial surface, the unfolding of gesture, and the structure of the painting.

The technique used draws as much from Cubism as from Pop Art through the use of transfer, a kind of process that expands the possibilities of the hand and the body. Technique is no longer merely in service of form, but something that, after the fact, breaks free from it and moves toward greater autonomy—beyond aesthetics—toward what the painter calls a “machine.”

**Christian Bonnefoi**

*P.L. I*, 1989

Acrylic on canvas  
250 x 200 cm







**Christian Bonnefoi**

*P.L. I, 1988*

Acrylic on Trevira  
60 x 60 cm



**Christian Bonnefoi**

*P.L. III, 1989*

Acrylic on canvas  
182 x 162 cm



## ***Fioretti*, series, 1989 - 2001**

The first sets of *Fioretti* appeared in 1989–90, as arrangements of small-format paintings, resembling tests, sketches, or drafts, or even details of works created at the time in Christian Bonnefoi's studio.

The title refers to the *Fioretti* of Saint Francis of Assisi, a collection of stories, anecdotes, and legendary miracles from the saint's life that inspired many Siennese and Florentine artists of the late Middle Ages.

**Christian Bonnefoi**

*Fioretti, La Vie Courante II*, 1993

Graphite and acrylic on canvas

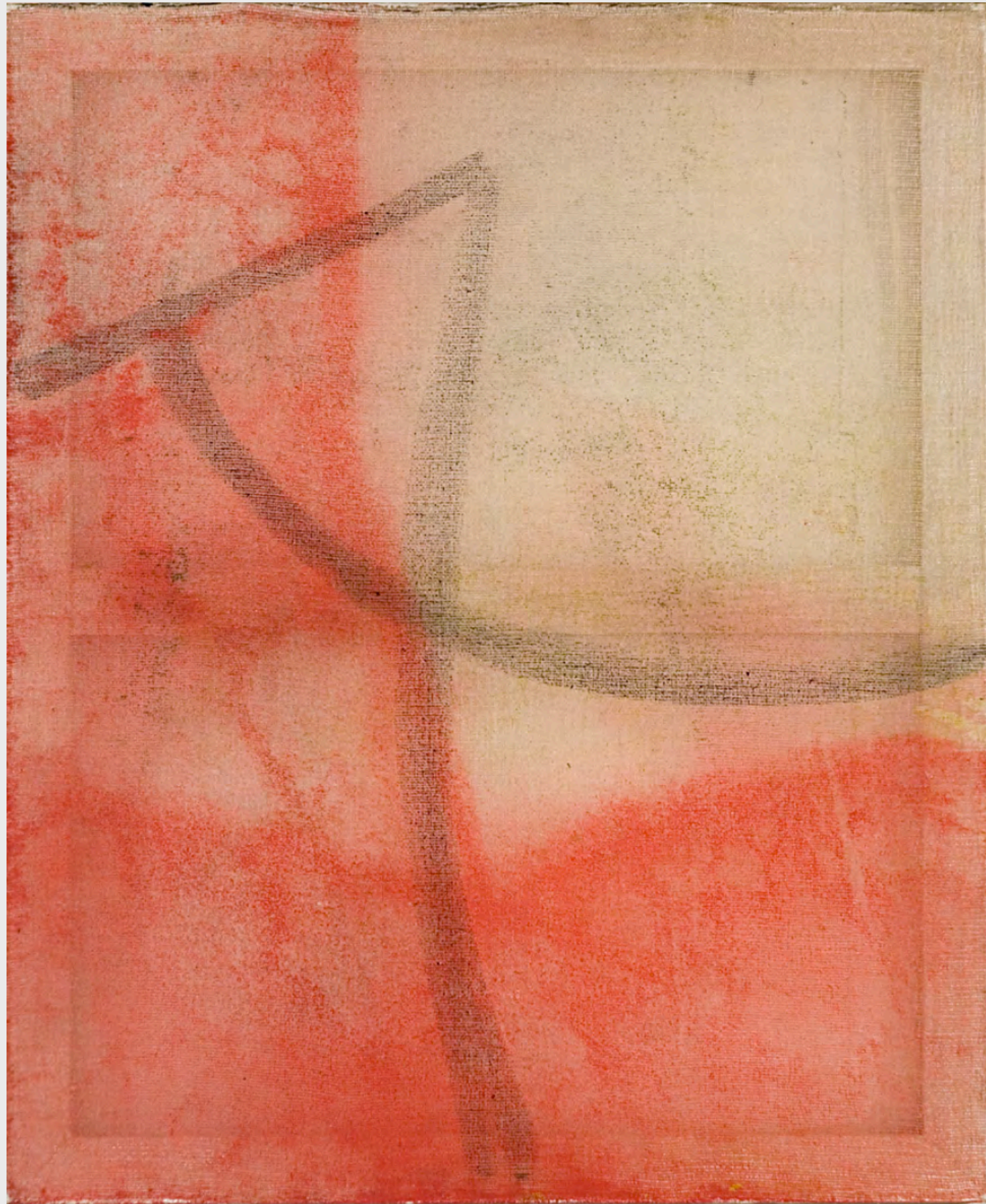
61 x 50 cm



**Christian Bonnefoi**

*Fioretti, La Vie Courante II, 1993*

Graphite and acrylic on canvas  
61 x 50 cm



**Christian Bonnefoi**

*Petit Fioretti, L'Obscur, 1991*

Pastel on canvas  
61 x 50 cm

**Christian Bonnefoi**  
*Petit Fioretti, L'Obscur, 1991*

Pastel on canvas  
61 x 50 cm





## ***Prophètes, series, 1993***

The *Prophètes* series dates from 1993. In it, Bonnefoi created 20 paintings on tarlatan, named in homage to the great figures of Western painting history. The brushstrokes delineate vast areas of solid color that interact with large sections of tarlatan left in reserve, either tinted or unpainted.

**Christian Bonnefoi**  
*Prophète, Edouard I, 1993*

Tarlatan canvas, acrylic  
150 x 150 cm

## ***Stations, series, 1993-1994***

Developed from the *Prophètes* (1993), this series of 14 *Stations* marks the culmination of a systematic serial approach. Each work originates from a single plastic matrix, exhausted through successive peelings. It brings together fragments of gestures and colors, taken from the matrix and glued into the tarlatan before being stretched onto a frame. The wooden stretchers, painted white and visible in the background, emphasize the structural dimension of the process.

**Christian Bonnefoi**  
*Station 10*, 1993-1994

Acrylic on canvas  
195 x 130 cm





**Christian Bonnefoi**  
*Station 2, 1993-1994*

Acrylic on canvas  
195 x 130 cm

## ***Biface*, series, 2020**

The *Bifaces* series appeared in 2012 and is part of the *Eureka* ensemble. It marks a decisive stage in Bonnefoi's exploration of thickness and transparency. These paintings are suspended in space, allowing them to be viewed in the round like sculptures.

Visible from both sides, the *Bifaces* make more legible the coexistence – on a single surface – of a front and a reverse, while simultaneously veiling them again through their mode of display. Light thus emerges as the absolute medium of painting: it passes through the work and transforms it with each of its variations.

**Christian Bonnefoi**

*Biface*, 2020

Acrylic on non-woven fabric  
30 x 30 x 4 cm





## ***Noir Soucis, series, 2026***

*Noir Soucis* is Christian Bonnefoi's most recent series, currently still in progress. Initiated in 2026, it will comprise a group of ten collages on Trevira.

**Christian Bonnefoi**

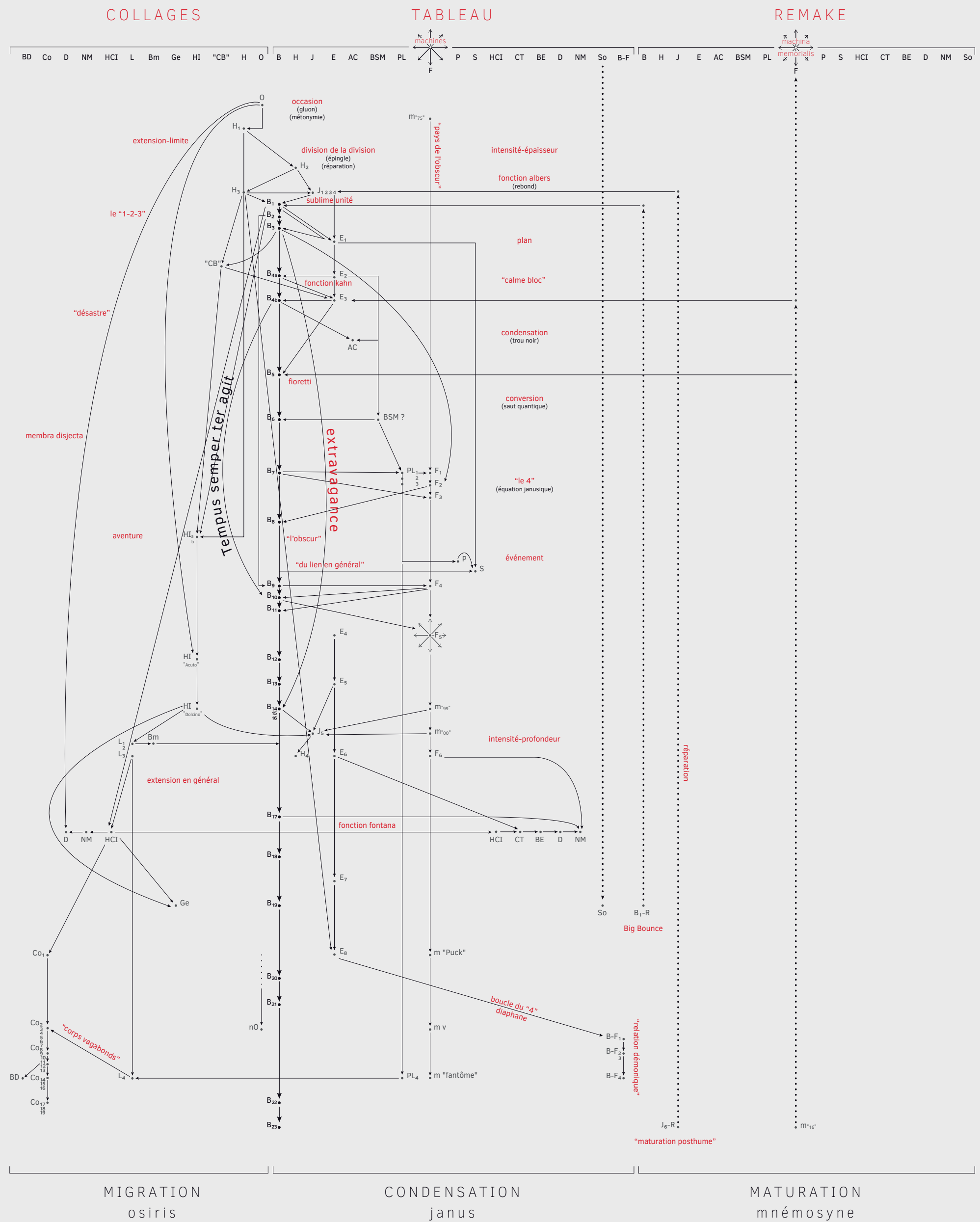
*Noir soucis, 2026*

Paper mounted on Trevira  
195 x 130 cm

# Introduction to the Diagram

Abréviations

1974 - 1975	Occasions (collage)	O
1975	machine 1975	m "75"
1975 - 1976	Hypérion 1 (collage)	H1
1977	Hypérion 2	H2
1978	Janapa 1, 2, 3, 4	J1, 2, 3, 4
1978 - 1979	Babel 1 "de la sphère"	B1
1979	Babel 2 "ciel liquide"	B2
1979 - 1980	Babel 3 "N-Y-C"	B3
1979 - 1981	Eureka 1	E1
1981	CB	"CB"
1981 - 1982	Eureka 2	E2
1981 - 1983	Babel 4 "Romain"	B4 a et b
1982 - 1983	Eureka 3	E3
1984	Les Armes d'Achille	AC
1985 - 1986	Babel 5 "sudej"	B5
1987 - 1988	Le Botaniste sans maître ?	BSM
1987 - 1988	Babel 6 "en grand deuil"	B6
1989 - 1990	PL1, 2, 3	PL1, 2, 3
1990 - 1991	Fioretti 1 "de la chouette et du vent"	F1
1991 - 1992	Babel 7 "l'obscur"	B7
1992	Fioretti 2 "de l'Ouanne à Changy"	F2
1992	Fioretti 3 "l'obscur"	F3
1993	Babel 8 "du serpent qui danse"	B8
1993 - 1994	Hommes illustres	HI a et b
1994	Prophètes	P
1995	Stations	S
1996	Fioretti 4 "amer et vainqueur"	F4
(1987) - 1996	Babel 9 "du rusé-doyen"	B9
1997	Babel 10 "des prophètes"	B10
1998	Babel 11 "des philosophes buveurs"	B11
1999	Eureka 4	E4
1999	Fioretti 5 "de la vie courante"	F5
1999	Hommes illustres "Acuto"	HI
2000	Babel 12 "comme un extravagant"	B12
2000	Eureka 5	E5
2000 - 2001	Babel 13 "au vrai pays de gloire"	B13
2001	Babel 14 "Rosa Silber"	B14
2003 - 2004	Babel 15 "du Zouave"	B15
2004	Babel 16 "Dogon"	B16
2005	Hommes illustres "Dolcino"	HI
2006	machine 1999	m "99"
2007	Janapa 5	J5
2008	machine 2000	m "00"
2009 - 2012	Ludo 1 et 2	L1, 2
2013	Babel mur	Bm
2014	Hypérion 4	H4
2015	Fioretti 6 "des fantômes épars"	F6
2016	Ludo 3	L3
2017	Eureka 6	E6
2018	Hinc canere incipiam	HCI
2019	Babel 17	B17
2020	Concetto temporale	CT
2021	Beatus	BE
2022	Dos	D
2023	Nature morte	NM
2024	Babel 18	B18
2025	Eureka 7	E7
2026	Babel 19 "de la crinière lourde"	B19
2027	Géométric	Ge
2028	Solitaires	So
2029	Babel 1 - Remake	B1-R
2030	machine "Puck"	m Puck
2031	Composition "Hermès"	Co1
2032	Eureka 8	E8
2033	Babel 20	B20
2034	Babel 21	B21
2035	machine volume	m v
2036	Nouvelles Occasions	nO
2037	Composition "Le Cateau-Cambrésis"	Co2
2038	Composition "Alexandre Hollan en Arcadie"	Co3
2039	Composition "à la guitare"	Co4
2040	Composition "les dos à Céret"	Co5
2041	Composition "la barque de Télémaque"	Co6
2042	Composition "la petite barque"	Co7
2043	Bi-Face	B1-F1
2044	Bi-Face 2	B1-F2
2045	Bi-Face 3	B1-F3
2046	Composition "asperge solitaire"	Co8
2047	Composition "le bain truc"	Co9
2048	Composition "la dispute de Barcelone, 1263"	Co10
2049	Composition "Ixodes Ricinus"	Co11
2050	Composition "le rêve sans-fond"	Co12
2051	Composition "la constellation du Cheval de Bois"	Co13
2052	Bi-Face 4	B1-F4
2053	Théâtre du Rêve Sans-Fond	BD
2054	Ludo 4 "migratoire"	L4
2055	PL4	PL4
2056	machine "fantôme"	m fantôme
2057	Composition "le Zodiaque au-dessus de Pusan"	Co14
2058	Composition "l'Ange Nouveau"	Co15
2059	Composition "la constellation du Cheval de Bois"	Co16
2060	Babel 22 « oppresso di stupore, à la mia guida/mi volsi »	B22
2061	Composition "le Rayon de la Providence"	Co17
2062	Composition "le Nouvel Homère"	Co18
2063	"Composition Marin"	Co19
2064	Janapa 6 - R	J6-R
2065	Babel 23 « citta ideale »	B 23
2066	machine 2016	m "16"



“ The Diagram is the presentation of my work along two axes :

- the ordinate, on which the list of each sequence, series, or ensemble is arranged chronologically, with their titles and abbreviations, up to 2016. For greater clarity, I provide a full listing up to 2021 following this introduction.
- the abscissa, headed by the two essential technical modes of my practice : Collage and Painting, to which I recently (2016) added a third term: Remake. As will be seen throughout my essays and the Lexicon, by technique I mean a mode of production that far exceeds the task of constructing and elaborating form as it is ordinarily understood; I conceive it in its original sense: a “thinking” of form, a silent logos; or, given here in the Diagram the call of words and language, a stammering logos, or again a particular mode of logos shared between image and word.

Within the Diagram, arrows indicate the type of relationship that each sequence maintains with the others. A direct (serial) link – one might say logical – of progression and continuous development of a specific and autonomous theme, represented by the titles of the series (the ordinate along the left edge of the Diagram). One can thus see that certain sequences have a stronger presence than others : *Babel*, for example (22 sequences), *Eureka* (8 sequences), etc.”

The transition from one sequence to another finds its rationale in the internal modification of form and process, more or less significant from one stage to the next. (...)

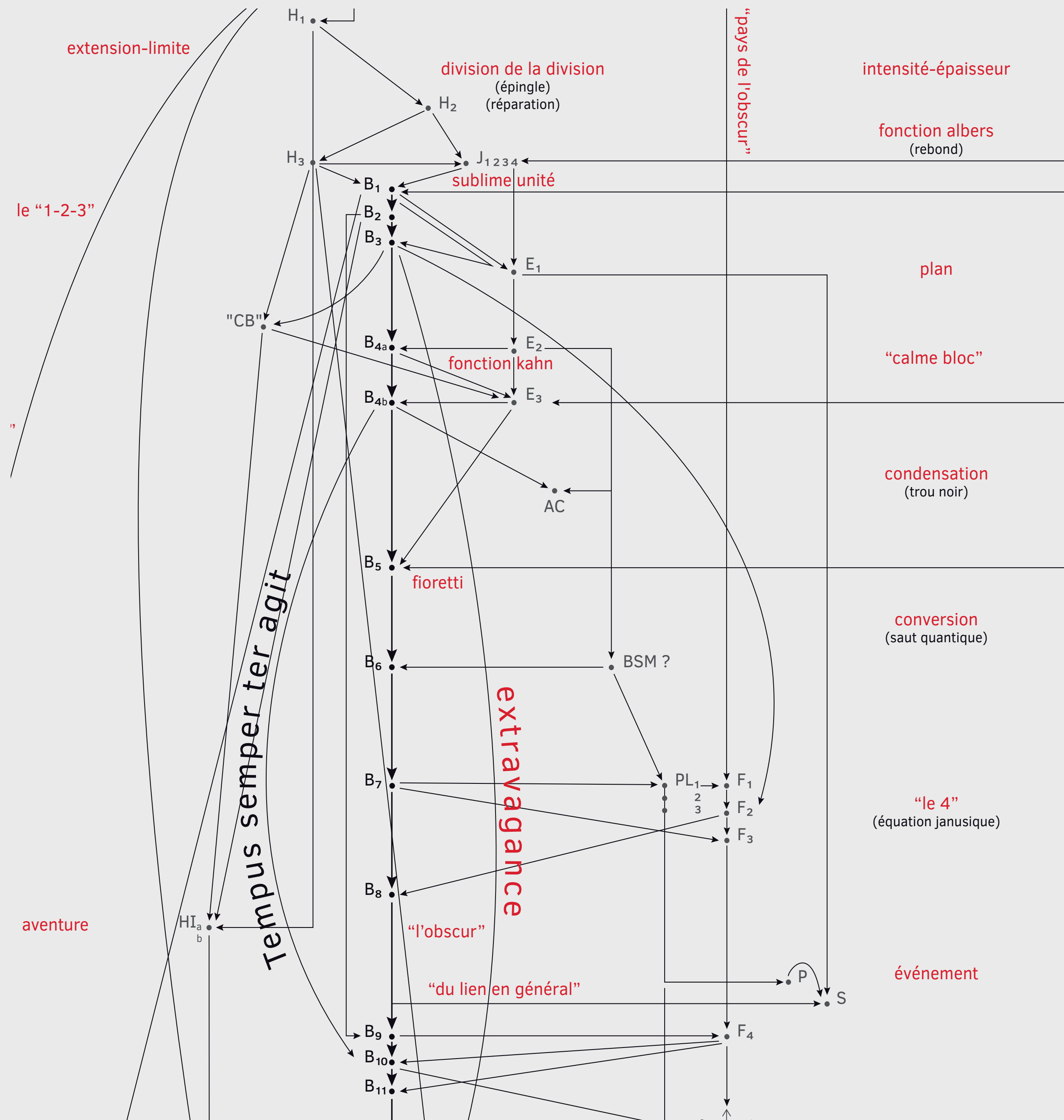
Most series are produced in parallel, or intersect regularly, depending on the processes at work, along the abscissa axis. Thus, the first four *Babel* sequences are created at the same time as the first three *Eureka* sequences. However, since each sequence has its own specific process – and therefore its own particular mode of appearance – the resulting paintings differ greatly in effect, contradicting the general idea of series and the homogenization of production as it is commonly practiced today.

The entire Diagram is traversed by arrows that leap across spaces and connect certain sequences to others. At times, these arrows are curved and move from one state to another within the same sequence – for example, from *Babel 4* to *Babel 10* : this indicates that part of what was implemented in 4, and which had remained, in a sense, dormant, is reactivated and brought forward in *Babel 10*. Thus, the state x of a sequence is both a completed, self-sufficient moment, while also containing within it – hidden or veiled – the potential to generate further development, either by expanding the visible form or by modifying its conditions of production, which are those of technique. (...)

But the most interesting aspect is what the transversal arrows reveal, where rupture within continuity becomes evident. Here, they connect heterogeneous spaces, articulating one series with another; more importantly, they transgress the boundaries of “techniques” : they move from Painting to Collage and, crucially, in a reciprocal manner. As a result, the hierarchy (conceptual and chronological) between the states of each sequence, between sequences, and between techniques is never fixed, but carried along by an anagrammatic drift. The Diagram thus becomes a kind of constellation populated by stars of words and images – a very particular zodiac in that, rather than outlining a fixed form, it continually reshapes both the contours and the structure of the constellation as soon as it seems established. (...)

The Diagram is a matrix – the concavity of study set against the convexity of pictorial effects. Yet this Diagram, which contains a sum of individual experiences in the form of fragments of words and images, is also a receptacle that welcomes certain pictorial or conceptual events carried along by history, each with its own proper name. I strive to weave these countless threads together, to thicken them through accumulation and merge them through interlacing, so that, in the end, only one thread remains visible – now without label. The idea of community reappears, along with a notion of anonymity, though a glorious one rather than a neglected one. In this way, I reconnect with the utopian project of a “collective” art championed by Situationism, even if those aspirations, then as now, are marked by a powerful (anonymous) melancholy – to which, as a painter, I would add a sense of nostalgia. Yet from the worst, the spirit of affirmation draws strength; at a moment when there is talk not of the death of painting but of art as a whole – when, symbolically (by chance or cynicism), the greatest art collection takes up residence in a Stock Exchange, and, to underscore the point, retains the name Bourse for the repurposed building – I tell myself that one must seize the opportunity : let art die its ill-fated death, and rediscover in painting what it was for millennia – a process of symbolization before the birth of art, before history: a mode of being and a way of exercising one’s freedom.

This Diagram helped me understand the necessity of such a conversion, in the Neoplatonic sense of the term but also in the technical sense implied by the use of machines: a conversion from effects back to their source.



But unlike Neoplatonic conversion, this one may deviate from its course, or pause along the way and wander at its edges, because within it the action (energeia) of form is not extinguished. Indeed, if technique once served the process to the point of disappearing into the completed form, in a second phase – that of the counter-process – it reemerges, comes to the fore, and acts again, but this time starting from the previously given form. This is why this “formed technique,” whatever its transformations and trajectories, retains within it the memory of its matrix of rebirth—the finished form. This memory may be manifest or not, may appear or remain hidden (Secret), but it remains present. (...)

The Diagram, like the Lexicon in parallel, becomes a system of notation, Novalis’s “general draft,” or a journal, or better still a space open to external interventions – generally by friends, close in their commitment to inquiry, whose own fields of research intersect with the questions that animate us. (...)

The Diagram, now endowed with the movement carried by the wind of painting, is one of the layers of its thickness – the most heterogeneous of all, and therefore the most conducive to the production of enigma – just like each of the planes of the painted or “collaged” sequences: it belongs entirely to the painting. It may well be something like that sudden intrusion into the stain (that is, the pictorial medium according to Benjamin) “of a higher power,” as he adds; and this power is the “word” that enters “into composition” within “the medium of pictorial language.” In my own terms, I would say that the notions of language have been pictorialized – that after having provided material for narrative by yielding to the attraction of language, they return to their place of origin, which is the true duration of painting.

# Biography





Born in 1948 in Salindres (France), Christian Bonnefoi lives and works in Gylles-Nonains (France).

A painter and theorist, Christian Bonnefoi has held numerous solo exhibitions since 1977 in Paris, Cologne, New York, Berlin, London, Tokyo, and beyond. He holds a PhD in art history from the Sorbonne and is the author of many articles and writings on art that have punctuated his career for over fifty years.

A singular figure on the contemporary French art scene since the 1970s, Bonnefoi's practice is built on a radical proposition: the disarticulation and re-articulation of the constituent elements of painting, particularly through the technique of collage.

Deeply engaged with the materiality of painting and the geometry of forms, his work oscillates between abstraction and figuration, while establishing numerous dialogues with the masters and avant-gardes of the 20th century (such as Matisse, Picasso, geometric abstraction, minimalism, Supports/Surfaces, etc.).

He is the author of several books and texts, including *Écrits sur l'art 1974-1981* (1999) and *Traité de peinture*, 2 vols. (2023), published by La Part de l'Œil. He is currently the director of the "L'Éclectique" collection at Éditions Eliott, which publishes four to five volumes per year on art, psychoanalysis, philosophy, and theology.

The **Musée National d'Art Moderne - Centre Pompidou** devoted his first retrospective exhibition to him in 2008.

Over the past fifty years, Christian Bonnefoi has made a fundamental contribution to the discourse on painting and its constitutive structure, approaching it as an object in its own right.

Bonnefoi traces the origin of his artistic approach to his discovery of Henri Matisse's *Backs*, presented in 1970 at the Grand Palais in Paris during the centenary exhibition *Henri Matisse*. From this encounter emerged his first *Dos* works four years later—a theme that has punctuated his work ever since.

A student of Hubert Damisch and Jean-Louis Schefer, Bonnefoi collaborated closely with Yve-Alain Bois and Jean Clayon the journal *Macula* in the mid-1970s. His work was later contextualized within renewed discussions on American and French perspectives on painting, notably in the seminal exhibition « *As Painting* » at the Wexner Center for the Arts in 2001, alongside artists such as Agnes Martin, Gerhard Richter, and Robert Ryman. The exhibition demonstrated Bonnefoi's continuing influence on subsequent generations.

The work of Christian Bonnefoi is held in and has been exhibited in numerous museums and institutions in France and internationally, including :

- The **Villa Emerige**, Paris (FR)
- The **Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou** in Paris, which hosted its first retrospective in 2008
- The **Musée Matisse - Cateau-Cambrésis**, Nice (FR)
- The **Jean-Paul Najar Foundation**, Dubaï (SA)
- The **Hermès Foundation - Le Forum**, Tokyo (JAP)
- The **Hermès Foundation - La Verrière**, Bruxelles (BE)
- The **MoMA PS1**, New York (USA)
- The **Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris** (FR)
- **FNAC, Fond National d'Art Contemporain**, Paris (FR)
- The **Musée d'Art Moderne**, Céret (FR)
- **Musée des Beaux-Arts**, Liège (FR)
- **Musée d'art contemporain**, Nice (FR)
- **Centre d'Art Les Tanneries**, Amilly (FR)
- The **Villa Medici**, Rome (IT)
- **Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts**, Bruxelles (BE)
- The **Deutsch Foundation**, Lausanne (CH), etc.

## **PREVIEW**

Thursday, April 16th, 2026  
5 p.m. – 9 p.m.  
*By invitation only*

## **PUBLIC OPENING**

Friday, April 17th, 2026  
11 a.m. – 8 p.m.

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