

ALECHINSKY

pinceau voyageur

VISITOR'S GUIDE

EN





Bougival, 1984
photo: Marc Trivier

cover:
Vocabulaire (detail), 1986

Alechinsky, traveling brush

Catherine de Braekeleer

I recalled the shade of the willows on the fences of a house in Tokyo, a moving, marvellously useless writing that translated the wind, the tree, and a natural caress into my painterly gestures. I remembered seeing Tōkō Shinoda carefully rubbing a stick of ink on the stone, attentively choosing her best brush.

Pierre Alechinsky

This exhibition represents an invitation to travel. Some hundred artworks produced between 1947 and 2024 connect Pierre Alechinsky to a single reality: his imagination before, during, and long after Cobra, which exalted his freedom of spirit, movement and experimentation.

Alechinsky, passionate about matters of writing, is fascinated by the artistic practices and traditions in Japan and China.

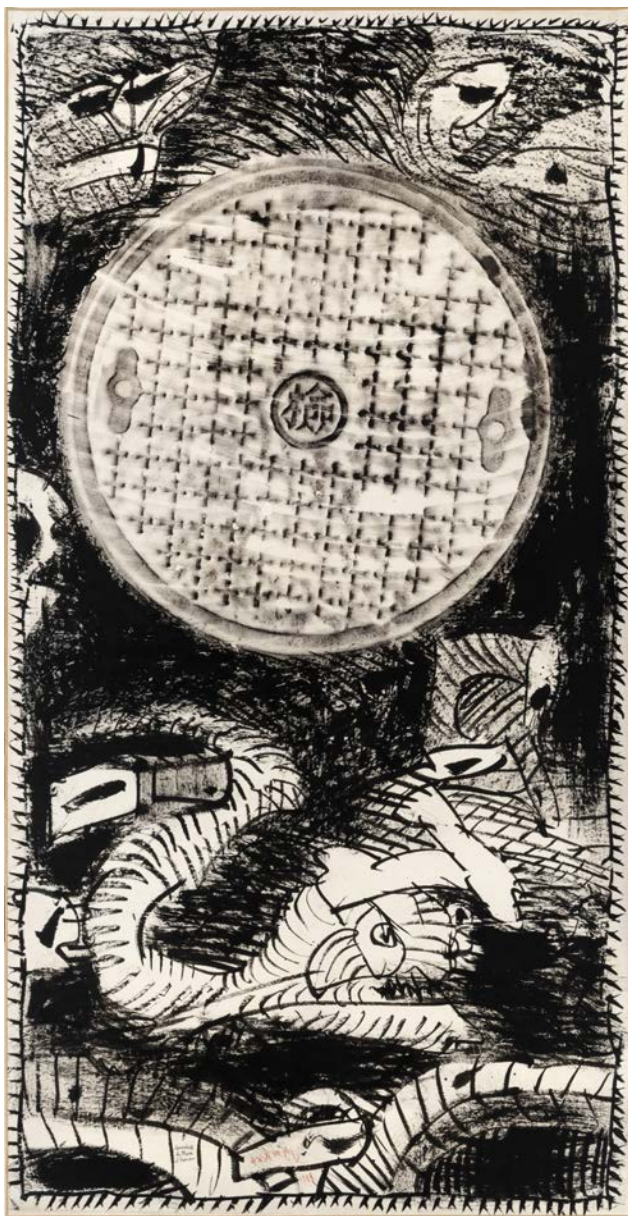
In the autumn of 1955, Alechinsky embarked for a two-month stay in Japan where he made a film, *Calligraphie japonaise*. Enthralled by the flowing movements of the East, Alechinsky adopted quicker, suppler materials. Paper, ink, and brushes became his preferred instruments.

While in Ting's New York Studio in the autumn of 1965, Alechinsky progressively started turning his back on oil painting. He began applying his acrylics on a paper laid flat on the floor before being marouflaged on canvas. He started painting hunched over, brush in his left hand and bowl of colour or ink in his right.

In 1988, while traveling in China, Alechinsky began embossing 'pieces of urban furniture' and ornaments from the bells of a temple stored in a military guarded warehouse! "I took their images with me thanks to this ancestral Chinese technique."

Alechinsky forged friendships with many writers. The exhibition features works created hand in hand with Joyce Mansour, an Egyptian poetess, Amos Kenan, an Israeli author, and the Lebanese essayist and poet Salah Stétié.

Yesterday already, today still, Alechinsky alertly delivers images narrating his past and present world, emerging from a paintbrush in a state of reverie.



Couvercle de trou d'homme, 1988
rubbing and ink on paper laid on canvas
185 x 97 cm

Salons

Harpsichord

I was asked to decorate a harpsichord. To determine the number of Taiwanese papers required for my paintings and to marouflage them on the woodwork, I went around the musical instrument holding a sheet of paper at arm's length. As I was going past the lid of the keyboard, I discovered a subtle difference between the actual distance between the arms of a harpsichordist—from low to high notes—and the widest possible width of a piece of paper that would allow a craftsman to pick it up with both hands, arms stretched out exactly right, not too wide, not too close.

Pierre Alechinsky

Remarques marginales

Gallimard, Paris, 1997

Stairs and passageways

Glazed lava

The artist's extraordinary aptitude to embrace new supports, prolonging his dream from painting to engraving, from drawing to lava slab, probably stems from the "travelling brush" that sweeps the painter's world with it wherever it chooses to roam. For more than twenty years, between 1980 to 2004, Alechinsky visited the studio of ceramist Hans Spinner in Grasse (Alpes-Maritimes). He tackled this new technique by limiting the enamelling to "kiln blue" – a cobalt oxide blue and – by prioritising the line of the drawing. Before long, square or circular lava slabs welcomed his interventions with the same flexibility as paper, lithographic stone or the engraving plate... volcanoes or waterfalls, Gilles de Binche, rippling waves, or dancing celestial bodies.

Daniel Abadie

Repères n° 84

Galerie Lelong, Paris, 1994

Northern room

My attention had just been drawn to a Japanese calligraphy magazine, *Bokubi*. It laid open on the right pages, amongst ink boxes, tarlatan cloths, and copper plates on a table at Stanley William Hayter's Atelier 17, where I worked in Paris. His studio and he himself, having emigrated to New York during World War II, had seen all the qualified European refugees and all the young American artists eager for qualified European refugees, pass through. I had only one goal left: to go to Japan to make a film about "grass script" calligraphy, the learning of the hand, their disciplines and indisciplines. I did so, encouraged by Henri Storck, a pioneer of documentary cinema.

Pierre Alechinsky,
Baluchons et ricochets
Gallimard, Paris, 1994

Projection room

Calligraphie japonaise

film by Pierre Alechinsky
17 minutes in black and white
cinematographer: Francis Haar

calligraphers: Shiryū Morita, Sogen Eguchi,
Tōkō Shinoda (...)
Tokyo and Kyoto, 1955

post-production: 1957
editing: Jean Cleinge
music: André Souris
commentary: Christian Dotremont
voice: Roger Blin

1957: First screening during the Tōkō Shinoda
exhibition at the Librairie - Galerie La Hune,
Paris; special mention at the International
Festival of Art Films in Bergamo (I).
1961: Honorary award at the Cultural Film
Festival, Tokyo

Fencing room

For a long time, NATO's aerial navigation charts enjoyed my preference. Their maritime boundaries show a blue border. Covered in ice, the land up there becomes a white desert. My paintbrush and I travel between blue and white. We enter an ultramarine fjord where wooden houses smoulder. We approach a port in Japan, an enchanting little cove in the Aleutian Islands, a seldom-visited Canadian bay that Riopelle discovered when he went fishing there in the spring. I leap much further with a paintbrush than with a pole vault. From Denmark to the North Cape. As I pass by, I glimpse at the tops of the Lappish hat of Logogus. I outline the Kola Peninsula with Indian ink and now follow the always white and blue fringes of Siberia. The seawater is dead over there, but you can't see that on printed paper. When we cross this area, we head straight for Lisbon, avoiding Cádiz, just like Filochard and Ribouldingue.

Pierre Alechinsky
Remarques marginales
Gallimard, Paris, 1997

Blue bathroom

Black on white, Alechinsky's paintbrush strokes motionless pages, binding together texts and drawings, transporting them back to the collective origin of Chinese writing, which, for the painter, transforms drawing into narrative and images into ideograms. As for writing a haiku, the space available to the painter demands a contraction of thought and gesture, reducing the illumination to a few sharp brushstrokes and incisive wit.

Daniel Abadie

Repères n° 84

Galerie Lelong, Paris, 1994

Guest bedroom

An unattended Ming tomb. Otherwise, guarded by a complacent soldier, and then annoyed. A dilapidated building, but sublime after visiting a dreadful restored tomb with street lamps and flower boxes like in Gisors. Not far away: a temple on a mountainside surrounded by white trees with antidiuretic fruits for long prayers. On the way back, passing by a paper cutting depot, a cascade of white ribbons, white hair, and an abandoned temple turned into a warehouse for enormous bronze bells. I had paper, ink, and a hard brush. Impressions of their reliefs depicting the sea, birds, clouds. "That's enough now" the guard makes clear. He too is a complacent soldier, and then annoyed.

Pierre Alechinsky
Remarques marginales
Gallimard, Paris, 1997

Monsieur's bedroom

For a long time - to be precise: since ***Central Park***, 1965 - I have been creating paintings with color at the center and a border in Indian ink: my "marginal notes."

In 1982, the central subject was treated in black, and the margins, previously dedicated to compartmentalized drawings, became a single colored border.

It took me time - years! - before I reversed it: imposing a large black drawing at the center, surrounded by colors.

I then realized that composing in a corridor, with no beginning or end around a central subject, changes all the habits of composition.

Pierre Alechinsky, 2024

Monsieur's bathroom

I lay the paper on the floor, and it awaits me. Coloured inks and water are poured into several identical bowls. I know their weight. My right hand holds them alternately. For me, it is my left hand, my best hand, that holds the brush.

— Which brush?

— A Japanese brush.

Nine centimeters of goat's hair fixed to nineteen centimeters of the very finest bamboo. Thus, we pass, my brush and I, indifferently from drawing to painting and from lithography to etching.

Pierre Alechinsky, 2024

Madame's bathroom

Often, with drawings (pencil or ink), Alechinsky works in series. Paradoxically, repetition allows for extreme variety. One sees the postures multiplying around the same challenge, the same definition. *Les Tireurs de langue* from 1960 provides a perfect example, it is as funny as it is moving. A book with Amos Kenan in 1961 will capture its magical nonchalance. Alechinsky reveals and asserts: a thousand figures of the deplorable and the tender giving free rein, tongues abound, seeking the air of an inappropriate utterance. A superb moment of drawing, like in 1968 with the other series *Sources d'information*.

Yves Peyré
Alechinsky marginalia,
Silvana Editoriale, Milan, 2016

Madame's bedroom

L'or du rien, 1968: a title suggested by Pierre Alechinsky one night when we were trying to come up with all sorts of ideas. We twisted the title around, listening to the ambiguous music of these opposites: gold and nothing. It's no accident that these words are opposed. The abundance of one, the paucity of the other. Facts deemed insignificant, moments considered unimportant, the thousand and one things in one's life generally represent snapshots of unimaginable value. If you know how to look, listen, feel indignation, and wonder, the ordinariness of ordinary life will never be just a peaceful countryside. Gold is for marvelling at, and nothing is for living.

Jacques Chancel
L'or et le rien
Plon, Paris, 1999

Boudoir

Meeting Pierre Alechinsky a quarter of a century ago proved one of the most influential events in my life. In an age when many artists often resort to pretence and futile tactics, I was at last looking at a pure painter. His hands and eyes were alive with colour. His fluid lines recalled Matisse. Despite being jagged at times, they could capture the music of shapes. I loved his compositions, his framings, and the borders embellished with signs that seemed—from their starting point—to try to isolate a world of dreams conjured up by the creator of a pulsating, noisy, and disorderly universe that serves as the arena of our existences, which are equally chaotic.

Salah Stétié et les peintres

Paul Valéry Museum, Sète, 2012



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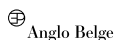
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