

GALERIE DIANE DE POLIGNAC

Gérard SCHNEIDER (1896-1986)

## PRESS KIT



## Gérard SCHNEIDER (1896-1986)

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The new 12-minutes documentary produced by the Diane de Polignac Gallery about Gérard Schneider's life and work.

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Gérard SCHNEIDER (1896-1986) - available pictures



1

Gérard Schneider in his studio Les Audigers, 1972  
Photograph: André Villers © Archives Gérard Schneider /  
Adagp, Paris.



2

Gérard Schneider in his studio painting *Opus 15 I*,  
Les Audigers, 1967  
Photograph: DR © Archives Gérard Schneider / Adagp, Paris.



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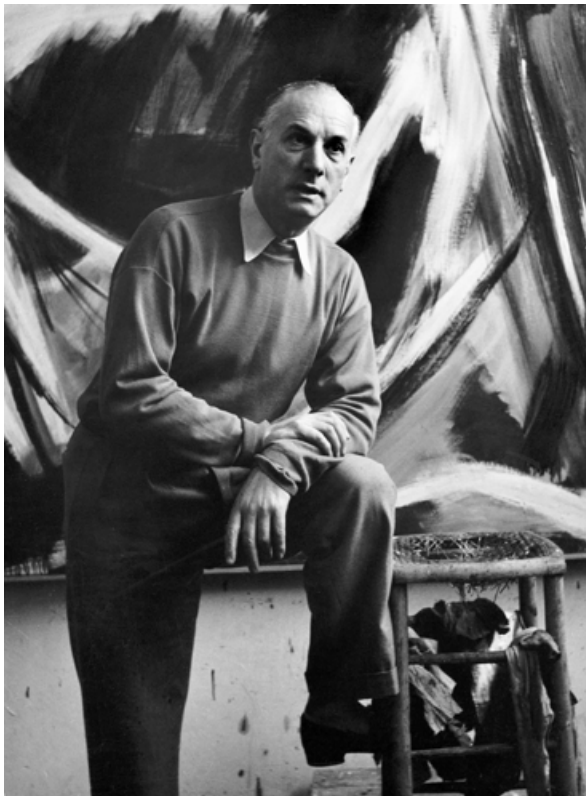
Gérard SCHNEIDER (1896-1986) - available pictures



3

Gérard Schneider in his studio, Les Audigers, 1985

Photograph: Alain Turpault © Archives Gérard Schneider / Adagp, Paris.



4

Gérard Schneider in front of *Opus 65 B*, studio rue Armand-Moisant, Paris, 1954 ca.  
Photograph: Margo Friters-Drucker © Archives Gérard Schneider / Adagp, Paris.



5

Gérard Schneider in his studio rue Armand-Moisant, Paris, 1945 ca.  
Photograph: DR © Archives Gérard Schneider.

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Gérard SCHNEIDER (1896-1986) - available pictures



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Gérard Schneider portrait, studio rue Armand-Moisant, Paris, 1959  
Photograph: Richard De Grab © Richard De Grab / Archives Gérard Schneider.



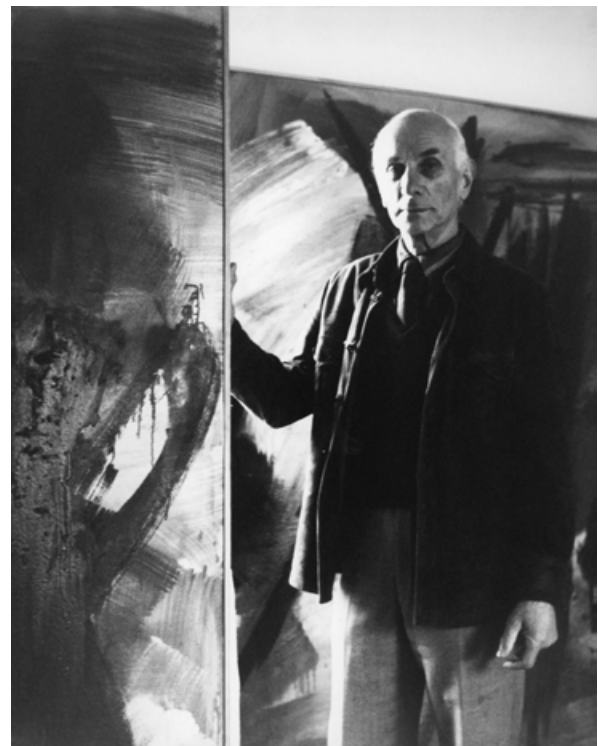
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Gérard Schneider in Gordes (south of France), 1946  
Photograph: DR © Archives Gérard Schneider.



8

Gérard Schneider portrait, Paris, 1916 ca.  
Photograph: DR © Archives Gérard Schneider.



9

Gérard Schneider portrait, Les Audigers, 1972  
Photograph: André Villers © Archives Gérard Schneider / Adagp, Paris.

## QUOTES

"Lyrical abstraction is primarily embodied by Gérard Schneider, as cubism is by Picasso."

Michel Ragon, *Schneider*, Angers, Expressions contemporaines, 1998

"As for colour... it appears in these recent works by Schneider, with ever greater freedom, as the quintessential factor of life, even when this colour is the black that Schneider uses with the mastery of one who knows how emotionally charged the suggestions of night and darkness are. The answer that these paintings find in the heart and intelligence - also fulfilled - of the beholder, completes this communion which had previously been established between the artist and the artwork, between form and space, between structure and motion."

Marcel Brion, from the French Academy, in the exhibition catalogue foreword at the Kootz Gallery, New York, 1958

"Abstract painting must be viewed in the same way as one listens to music: feeling the emotional interiority of the work without seeking to identify it with any sort of figurative representation. What is important is not to see abstract art but to feel it. If I am touched or moved by a piece of music it means that I have understood something, that I have received something."

Gérard Schneider

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"Schneider's painting is so absolutely objective, so universal, that it defies historicity because it is history itself in its monumental orchestration. Schneider's art is both the self that looks at itself and is looked at."

Eugène Ionesco

"What a convincing testimony of the ongoing, decisive yet singular presence of one of the first artists to relaunch abstract art in France, as early as 1945, and to establish himself as a pioneer of lyrical abstraction."

Gaston Diehl

"One may observe, however, in some of Schneider's works (...) a certain depth, brought about by the play of values, greys and blacks: but this has nothing in common with the standard third dimension, the Italian- style perspective: it is rather an additional dimension, possibly caused by a new relationship between the eye and the mind."

Charles Estienne, 1946

"A painting is an organized whole, a set of relations between shapes, lines, coloured surfaces, to which the meanings that are given are found or lost."

Gérard Schneider, in *Entretiens sur l'Art abstrait*, Pierre Cailler, 1964

"Schneider is among the first 'gesturals', and this explains his success in the United-States; in Paris, where interest in the 'gesturals' of the American school came later, they overlooked the fact that other artists in Europe had followed the same process at the same time and in some cases even earlier."

Simone Frigerio

"Gérard Schneider... accelerates at a rapid rate his broad, bold brush strokes. Or else, he slows then down to being almost motionless. In any case his foot is always on the accelerator... Schneider manipulates his speeds with great mastery. Forms plunge and color, rich, sumptuous, switches on and off like the lamp of a lighthouse."

Stuart Preston, in *New York Times*, 15 April 1956

## BIOGRAPHY

GÉRARD SCHNEIDER (1896-1986)

**Pioneer of the Lyrical abstraction with Pierre Soulages and Hans Hartung, Gérard Schneider is one of the XX century major painter.**

His friend, the art critic Michel Ragon said about him: "Schneider was always a romantic, an extremely emotional character, moved by the inspired spirit of a painter that pounced to capture the fugitive instant. Wagnerian romanticism sensitive to drama, but also influenced by gleams of joy and flashes of passion." in Michel Ragon, *Schneider*, Angers, Expressions contemporaines, 1998

### THE YEARS OF STUDY (1916-1937)

Gérard Schneider was born in Sainte-Croix in Switzerland in 1896. He spent his childhood in Neuchâtel where his father was a cabinetmaker and antique dealer.

At the age of 20, he went to Paris to study at the École nationale des arts décoratifs, and then in 1918 entered **the studio of Fernand Cormon at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts de Paris**. Cormon had also taught Vincent van Gogh and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

In 1922, Gérard Schneider settled permanently in Paris. **The 1920s and 1930s were marked by a long period during which he learned different techniques and the history of painting.**

In 1926, he exhibited for the first time at the Salon d'Automne. The work he showed, *L'Allée hippique* (Horse Pathway), attracted attention. He also frequented musical circles in Paris. He exhibited five paintings, including *Figures dans un jardin* (Figures in a Garden) at the Salon des Surindépendants of 1936, which were appreciated by the critic of *La Revue Moderne*: "a style, figures of such agility that the expression of movement seems to have been included in the rapid technique".

He also discovered the artistic movements of the century of upheavals and tragedies during this period.

In the mid-1930s, **Gérard Schneider assimilated the revolution initiated by Kandinsky's abstraction, while also exploring the new horizons introduced by Surrealism**. He no longer painted from reality. His palette darkened, black now occupied an important position and formed structures. He wrote poems and frequented the Surrealists: Luis Fernandez, Oscar Dominguez, Paul Éluard and Georges Hugnet.



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## TOWARDS ABSTRACTION (1938-1949)

From 1938, the titles of his paintings no longer referred to reality: the three sent to the Salon des Surindépendants were called *Composition*. In 1939, he met Picasso. **Around 1944, his painting definitively abandoned all references to reality.**

In 1945, the Musée National d'Art Moderne bought one of his paintings (*Composition*, 1944).

In the effervescence of the immediate post-war period, Gérard Schneider's art played a pioneering role in the birth of a new form of abstraction. In Paris, he and other precursors proposed a return to the radicality of abstraction, a form of abstraction that no longer had any connection with the real and perceptible world and would become a landmark, it matched the aesthetic imperatives of this transitional period: it was called Lyrical Abstraction.

## THE YEARS OF GLORY (1950-1961)

Alongside artists such as Jean-Michel Atlan, André Lansky, Georges Mathieu and especially **Hans Hartung and Pierre Soulages with whom he formed sincere friendships**, Gérard Schneider very quickly saw his work acquire an international dimension. From the mid-1940s, major exhibitions grouping the main members of lyrical abstraction were organized in Paris, especially at the galleries of Lydia Conti and Denise René.

Abroad, at major travelling exhibitions, the public discovered this vital creative momentum: around Germany from the late 1940s: this was the exhibition *Wanderausstellung Französischer Abstrakter Malerei* which circulated throughout West Germany between 1948 and 1949. Schneider's works were exhibited immediately afterwards in the USA: at the Betty Parsons Gallery (in 1949 and 1951) and in the major travelling exhibition *Advancing French Art* that was shown all over the country, from Chicago to San Francisco.

**Between 1955 and 1961, the Samuel Kootz Gallery in New York was his exclusive dealer in the USA and his representative there.** Gérard Schneider joined his friend Pierre Soulages in this prestigious gallery.

The Phillips Gallery of Washington bought *Opus 445* of 1950 and New York's MoMA bought *Opus 95 B* of 1955.

In 1956, he married for the second time. His wife was Lois Frederick, a young American woman who had come to Paris to study art on a Fulbright scholarship, whom he met through Marcel Brion. Around the same time, Schneider met Eugène Ionesco.

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Exhibitions were held successively around the world.

From the early 1950s, his works were exhibited in Europe: for example, in Brussels where there was a first retrospective in 1953, then a second one in 1962 in association with the Düsseldorf Kunstverein. He also participated in the first two editions of Documenta in Kassel in 1955 and 1959.

**He exhibited three times at the Venice Biennale, in 1948, 1954 and 1966.**

In 1957, he won the Prix Lissone.

**His works also travelled regularly, to Japan from 1950 until the early 1970s,** especially for the International Exposition of Art. In addition, for the International Art Exhibition in Tokyo in 1950, he was awarded the prize of the Governor of Tokyo.

He also showed several times at the São Paulo Biennale: in 1951, 1953 and 1961. During the 1961 edition, Jean Cassou, chief curator of the Musée National d'Art Moderne de Paris, asked Schneider to create four canvas paintings 2 x 3 m for a group of ten large format works that were exhibited.

## THE YEARS OF ENLIGHTENMENT (1962-1972)

During the 1960s, he maintained a close connection with the Milan-based dealer, Bruno Lorenzelli who held many exhibitions of his work around Italy. This decade of change saw **Schneider's painting acquiring more colour, becoming freer while the gesture acquired a definitively calligraphic dimension.**

Yet again, Schneider's work evolved and echoed the aesthetic aspirations of his time as much as a complex interior process that had begun many years earlier. **A synthesis of the notions of form, colour and space.**

**At the 1966 Venice Biennale, an entire room of the French Pavilion was devoted to his work.**

Similarly, a major retrospective was held of his work in Turin in 1970 where about a hundred paintings were exhibited at the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna. This was a great success, and then the exhibition continued at the "Terre des Hommes" Pavilion in Montreal.

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## MATURITY AND THE LARGE WORKS ON PAPER (1973-1986)

**At over 70, his art continued its effervescence.** The fire was still as intense. The volcanic eruption of colour more fervent than ever, as if his work was destined never to be extinguished.

Exhibitions continued at the same pace, such as those held by the Galerie Beaubourg in Paris.

**This fire, this energy, required a speed of execution that only paper seemed to allow.** At the start of the 1980s, he turned towards this support almost exclusively. This is how, in the intimacy of his studio, large and luminous compositions full of colour were born, enflamed, the unreal beauty of which continue to fascinate.

Gérard Schneider left this world on 8 July 1986 at the age of 90 and bequeathed us an oeuvre that was both simultaneously unfathomable in its aesthetic complexity and yet so close, so human and so sensitive.

## GÉRARD SCHNEIDER TODAY

Today his works are on view in the most important museums such as MoMA in New York, the Phillips Collection in Washington, the Walker Art Center of Minneapolis, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of Fine Arts of Seoul, Brussels Museum of Modern Art, the GAM of Turin, the Kunsthaus in Zurich and the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

In 1998, Michel Ragon published a major monograph on his work.

In 2021, the Galerie Diane de Polignac will publish the *Catalogue Raisonné of the Painted Work* of Gérard Schneider.

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## MAJOR COLLECTIONS

Brussels, Musée Modern Museum  
Buffalo, NY, Albright-Knox Art Gallery  
Cologne, Musée Ludwig  
Colorado Springs, Co, Fine Art Center  
Dunkirk, LAAC  
Geneva, Fondation Gandur pour l'Art  
Jakarta, Museum  
Kamakura (Japan), Museum of State  
Los Angeles, Ca, University of California  
Minneapolis, Mn, Walker Art Center  
Nantes, Musée d'Arts  
Neuchâtel (Switzerland), Musée d'Art et d'Histoire  
New Haven, Ct, Yale University  
New York, NY, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)  
Oslo, Sonja Henie and Niels Onstad Foundation  
Paris, Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris  
Paris, Musée national d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou  
Phoenix, Az, Phoenix Museum  
Princeton, Ma, Princeton University  
Rome, Galleria d'Arte Moderna  
Rio de Janeiro, Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro  
Saint-Louis, Mo, Washington University  
Seoul, Fine Art museum  
Turin, Galleria civica d'Arte Moderna  
Washington D.C., The Phillips Collection  
Worcester, Ma, Worcester Museum  
Zurich, Kunsthaus



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## MAJOR EXHIBITIONS

Galerie Denise René, Paris, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1953

Galerie Lydia Conti, Paris, 1947, 1948, 1950

Venice Biennale, 1948, 1954, 1966

*Wanderausstellung Französischer Abstrakter Malerei*, travelling group show in West Germany: Stuttgart, Munich, Düsseldorf, Hanover, Hamburg, Frankfurt am Main, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1948-1949

Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, 1949, 1951

*Les grands courants de la peinture contemporaine (de Manet à nos jours)*, travelling group show in South America, 1949-1950

*Advancing French Art*, travelling group show in United States of America: Louisville, Bloomington, San Francisco, Chicago and Washington, 1951-1952

São Paulo Biennale, 1951, 1954, 1961

Der Spiegel Gallery, Cologne, 1952, 1953, 1955, 1957, 1981

Otto Stangl Gallery, Munich, 1952

International Art Exhibition, travelling group show in Japan, 1953-1965

*Gérard Schneider*, retrospective, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 1953

Galerie Arnaud, Paris, 1954, 1959, 1965, 1967, 1968, 1970

Documenta in Kassel, 1955, 1959

Kootz Gallery, New York, 1956-1961

Galerie Apollinaire, Milan, 1958

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, 1958, 1959, 1966, 1972

Lorenzelli Gallery, Milan, 1960, 1961, 1965, 1972, 1974, 1986, 1989, 2012

Minami Gallery, Tokyo, 1960

Nakanoshima Gallery, Osaka, 1960

Im Erker Gallery, Saint-Gall, 1961, 1963

Salon de Mai in Japan, Tokyo, Osaka, 1962

*Gérard Schneider*, retrospective, travelling exhibition: Kunstverein, Düsseldorf / Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 1962

*Paintings in France 1900-1967*, travelling group show in United States of America: New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and in Canada, 1968

*Gérard Schneider*, retrospective, Galleria civica d'Arte moderna, Turin, 1970 Pavillon Terre des Hommes, Montreal, 1970

*Panorama de l'Art contemporain*, travelling group show in Iran, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, 1971-1972

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Galerie Beaubourg, Paris, 1974, 1975, 1977, 1981, 1986

*Gérard Schneider*, retrospective, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Neuchâtel (Switzerland) /  
Musée d'Art Contemporain, Dunkerque (France), 1983

FIAC, Galerie Patrice Trigano, Paris, 1983

Kunstmesse, Basel, 1985

*L'Europe des grands maîtres*, Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris / Musée des beaux-arts,  
Seoul, 1989

*Schneider, rétrospective*, travelling retrospective in France: Clermont-Ferrand,  
Carcassonne, Montbéliard, Le Mans, Metz, 1998-2001

*L'Envolée lyrique*, Paris 1945-1956, Musée du Luxembourg, Paris, 2006

*Gérard Schneider, grands gestes pour un grand monde*, Musée d'Art & d'Histoire,  
Neuchâtel (Switzerland), 2011

*Montparnasse / Saint-Germain-des-Prés*, Angers / Bordeaux, 2012

*Les Sujets de l'abstraction, Peinture non-figurative de la Seconde École de Paris (1946-1962)*, group show, Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Musée Rath, Geneva / Musée Fabre,  
Montpellier, 2011

*Gérard Schneider, rétrospective*, Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Orléans, 2013

*Le Geste et la Matière – Une abstraction « autre » – Paris, 1945-1965*, Fondation Clément, Le  
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