

DIANE DE POLIGNAC

# Pierrette Bloch (1928 - 2017)



Pierrette Bloch was a French-born Swiss painter and sculptor. Known for a body of work defined by minimalist forms and the contrast between black and white, the post-war artist used drawing, collage, painting, weaving and sculpture in her work.

## BIOGRAPHY

### PIERRETTE BLOCH'S EARLY LIFE AND ARTISTIC TRAINING

Pierrette Bloch was born in Paris on 16 June 1928. The Bloch family fled to Switzerland to escape occupied France when war broke out. In 1939, Pierrette Bloch was struck by her first aesthetic revelation when she encountered the masterpieces of the Museo del Prado, which were on show in Geneva at the time. Pierrette Bloch immersed herself in literature, which became an important source of inspiration for the young artist. She also attended conferences on art history, including a lecture by the curator and historian René Huyghe on the theme of linearity, which led her to establish an artistic practice based on the relationship between drawing, time and writing.

### MEETING PIERRE SOULAGES

After the end of the Second World War, Pierrette Bloch returned to Paris where she studied law and literature. Turning her attention to drawing and painting, she joined the studio of Jean Souverbie in 1947. The following year, Pierrette Bloch studied with André Lhote and then Henri Goetz in their studios. The latter introduced Bloch to the painter Pierre Soulages, with whom she developed a close friendship. Influenced by Pierre Soulages and also Nicolas de Staël, Pierrette Bloch created her first abstract paintings, which were heavily textured and structured using grid compositions.

### THE ARTIST PIERRETTE BLOCH'S "YEARS OF WANDERING"

Pierrette Bloch's work was exhibited for the first time at the Salon des Surindépendants in Paris in 1949. The artist's first solo exhibition was presented in 1951 at the Galerie Mai in the French capital. Pierrette Bloch's first solo exhibition in the United States took place in the same year, presented at the Hacker Gallery in New York. The following year, the artist's work was shown at the *French Art of the XX<sup>th</sup> Century* exhibition at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1953, Pierrette Bloch created her first collages and moved into a studio on Rue Antoine-Chantin in the 14<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris.

In the 1950s, Pierrette Bloch's work was defined by the importance of rhythm, the balance between fullness and emptiness, and the contrast between black and white. Entering a period that she called her "years of wandering", the artist withdrew from the art world to her studio.

### THE ARTIST PIERRETTE BLOCH'S WORK ON PAPER

The 1960s were a period of investigation and experimentation for Pierrette Bloch, who abandoned painting in 1965 to devote herself to collage. In 1968, the artist spent some time in New York where she created her first collages on paper—Canson, kraft or Bristol—which she mounted on Masonite panels.

In the early 1970s, Pierrette Bloch began working with ink on paper, creating networks of spots and dots on white backgrounds that would become emblematic of her work. At the same time, she experimented with other techniques—using chalk, charcoal, graphite, oil pastels and dry pastels.

### THE ARTIST PIERRETTE BLOCH'S WORK IN TEXTILES

The year 1973 marked an important juncture in Pierrette Bloch's work, as the artist began integrating cords and threads into her work. Pierrette Bloch began creating meshes using hemp in 1978 and adopted horsehair as a material in 1984. These materials would become essential to her work. A textile artist, Pierrette Bloch used weaving, braiding, knitting and embroidery techniques to create paths and lines sometimes reaching up to several metres in length. These minimal sculptural forms were made up of loops running over a taut nylon thread. These works were influenced by the minimalist music that the artist discovered in 1976.

### THE ARTIST'S "LINES OF PAPER" AND "PLACES OF UNCERTAINTY"

Pierrette Bloch's work in relief found its counterpart in the artist's pictorial work when she created her first "lines of paper" in 1994. In a form of abstract writing, the artist produced loops of ink imitating loops of fibre. Pierrette Bloch's own writing was also reflected throughout her work, the artist's poetic texts regularly accompanying her pictorial works.

Bloch also created what she called her "places of uncertainty", producing boundless arrays of dots in Indian ink on white paper in long-format pieces that could stretch to more than ten metres in length. The theme of repetition played an essential role in Pierrette Bloch's work, which was characterised by her large formats and economical use of resources.

In 1999, Pierrette Bloch's work was presented in a retrospective exhibition at the Musée de Grenoble in Grenoble, France, and then at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in La-Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland. In 2002, the Cabinet d'Art Graphique at the Centre Pompidou exhibited the artist's works, and the following year, a solo exhibition entitled *Lignes et crins* was presented at the Musée Picasso in Antibes. In 2005, the Fondation Pro-Mahj at the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme in Paris awarded the Maratier Prize to Pierrette Bloch for her life's work. In 2009, the Musée Fabre in Montpellier presented a solo exhibition of Pierrette Bloch's work. The following year, the artist participated in the exhibition *On Line* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Pierrette Bloch died on 7 July 2017 in Paris, France.

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## SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Amiens, Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain (FRAC) – Picardy  
Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum  
Antibes, Musée Picasso  
Bethany, CT (United States), Josef & Anni Albers Foundation  
Eilat (Israel), Eilat Museum, Israel  
Geneva, MAMCO, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain  
Grenoble, Musée de Grenoble  
La Fleuriaye (France), Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain (FRAC) – Pays de Loire  
Les Sables d'Olonne, Musée de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix  
Metz, Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain (FRAC) – Lorraine  
Montpellier, Musée Fabre  
Neuchâtel, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire  
New York, NY, Museum of Modern Art  
New York, NY, New York Public Library  
New York, NY, Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou  
Paris, Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris  
Paris, Fonds National d'Art Contemporain (FNAC)  
Paris, Fondation Louis Vuitton  
Paris, Manufacture Nationale des Gobelins, Mobilier National Collection  
Paris, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme  
Rennes, Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain (FRAC) – Brittany  
Sitges (Spain), Stämpfli Foundation  
Vevey (Switzerland), Nestlé Art Collection, Musée Jenisch Vevey  
Zurich, Museum Bellerive

## SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Salon des Surindépendants, Paris, 1949  
*Pierrette Bloch*, Hacker Gallery, New York, 1951  
Galerie Mai, Paris, 1951  
*French Art of the XX<sup>th</sup> Century*, Cambridge Art Association, Harvard University, Cambridge (MA), 1952  
Salon des Surindépendants, Paris, 1962  
*Force Nouvelle*, American Artist's Center, Paris, 1962  
*Peintures récentes*, Galeries Georges Bongers, Paris, 1963  
Maison de la Culture, Le Havre, 1967  
*Collages*, Galerie La Roue, Paris, 1971  
*Grandes femmes et petits formats*, Galerie Iris Clert, Paris, 1974  
Musée de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix, Les Sables d'Olonne, 1976  
*Encres et mailles*, Galerie de France, Paris, 1978  
*Drawing: an exhibition of seven French artists*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York, NY, 1978  
*Mailles et mailles de crin*, Maison de la Culture, Namur (Belgium), 1982  
*Lignes, mailles et fils de crin*, Galerie Faust, Geneva, 1986  
*Mailles, collages et fils de crin*, Musée d'Art Moderne, Troyes (France), 1987  
*Encres sur papier*, Bibliothèque Municipale, Villeneuve-d'Ascq (France), 1992

*Lignes et dessins de crin*, Galerie Rosa Turetsky, Geneva, 1993  
*Pierrette Bloch*, Janus Avivson Gallery, London, 1995  
Maison des Arts Georges-Pompidou, Cajar (France), 1998  
Galerie Rosa Turetsky, Geneva, Switzerland, 1999  
Retrospective exhibition, Musée de Grenoble, Grenoble, 1999  
Musée des Beaux-Arts, La-Chaux-de-Fonds (Switzerland), 1999  
*Pierrette Bloch*, Cabinet d'Art Graphique – Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2002  
*Lignes et crins*, Musée Picasso, Antibes, 2003  
*Œuvres récentes*, Galerie Frank Elbaz, Paris, 2004  
Galerie Stadtpark, Krems (Austria), 2005  
*Pierrette Bloch, Œuvres 1968 - 2005*, Galerie Lucie Weill & Seligmann, Paris, 2005  
*Lignes verticales, 36 dessins*, Galerie Rosa Turetsky, Geneva, Switzerland, 2005  
Art Paris, Grand Palais, Galerie Marwan Hoss, Paris, 2006  
Galerie Lucie Weill & Seligmann, Paris, 2006  
*Black and white abstractions*, Haim Chanin Fine Arts, New York, 2006  
Galerie Phobus, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 2006  
Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, Paris, 2006  
*Le noir est une couleur*, Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul de Vence (France), 2006  
*Collages 1953-1977*, Galerie Lucie Weill & Seligmann, Paris, 2007  
*L'ivresse de l'absolu*, Fondation pour l'Art Contemporain Claudine et Jean-Marc Salomon, Alex (France), 2008  
Musée Fabre, Montpellier, 2009  
Haim Chanin Fine Arts, New York, 2009  
*On Paper*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, 2009  
*On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century*, group exhibition, MoMA, New York, 2010  
*Selected Works*, Haim Chanin Fine Arts, New York, 2010  
*On Paper II*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, 2010  
Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, 2011  
*Œuvres de 1975 à 2011*, Galerie Rosa Turetsky, Geneva, 2011  
*Manière noires*, Beaux-Arts de Mons, Mons (France), 2011  
*Pierrette Bloch, l'intervalle*, Musée Jenisch Vevey, Vevey (Switzerland), 2013  
Solo exhibition, La Maison des Arts, Bages D'Aude (France), 2013  
*Designing Modern Women*, MoMA, New York, 2013  
*Punkt, Linie, Poesie*, Museum Pfalzgalérie, Kaiserslautern (Germany), 2014  
*Decorum, Tapis et tapisseries d'artistes*, Musée de la Ville de Paris, Paris 2014  
Retrospective exhibition, Musée Jenisch Vevey, Vevey (Switzerland), 2014  
*Œuvres récentes*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, 2015  
*Un certain nombre d'œuvres. 1971-2016*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, 2017  
*Quelques traits*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, 2018  
*The dotted line*, Galerie Karsten Greve, St. Moritz (Switzerland), 2020

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Françoise Cachin-Nora in *Cimaise*, No. 127-128, 1976
- Pierre Encrevé, *L'ombre de l'écriture*, Entretien avec Pierrette Bloch, Maison des Arts Georges Pompidou, Cajarc, 1998
- Pierrette Bloch*, exhibition catalogue, Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2002
- Alfred Pacquement, Olivier Kaepelin, Yves le Fur, *Lignes d'encre, lignes de crin*, Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou, 2002
- Marie-Jo Bonnet, *Les Femmes artistes dans les avant-gardes*, Éditions Odile Jacob, 2006
- Amblart Elisabeth (dir.), *Pierrette Bloch*, exhibition catalogue, Musée Fabre, Montpellier, Arles, Actes Sud, 2009
- Pamela Lee, Julie Enckell-Julliard, Catherine de Zegher, Nicolas Muller, Laurence Schmidlin, *Pierrette Bloch*, Éditions Ringier, 2013
- Pierrette Bloch, *Discours & Circonstances*, Éditions Méridianes, 2013
- Pierrette Bloch : un certain nombre d'œuvres 1971-2016*, exhibition catalogue, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, 2017