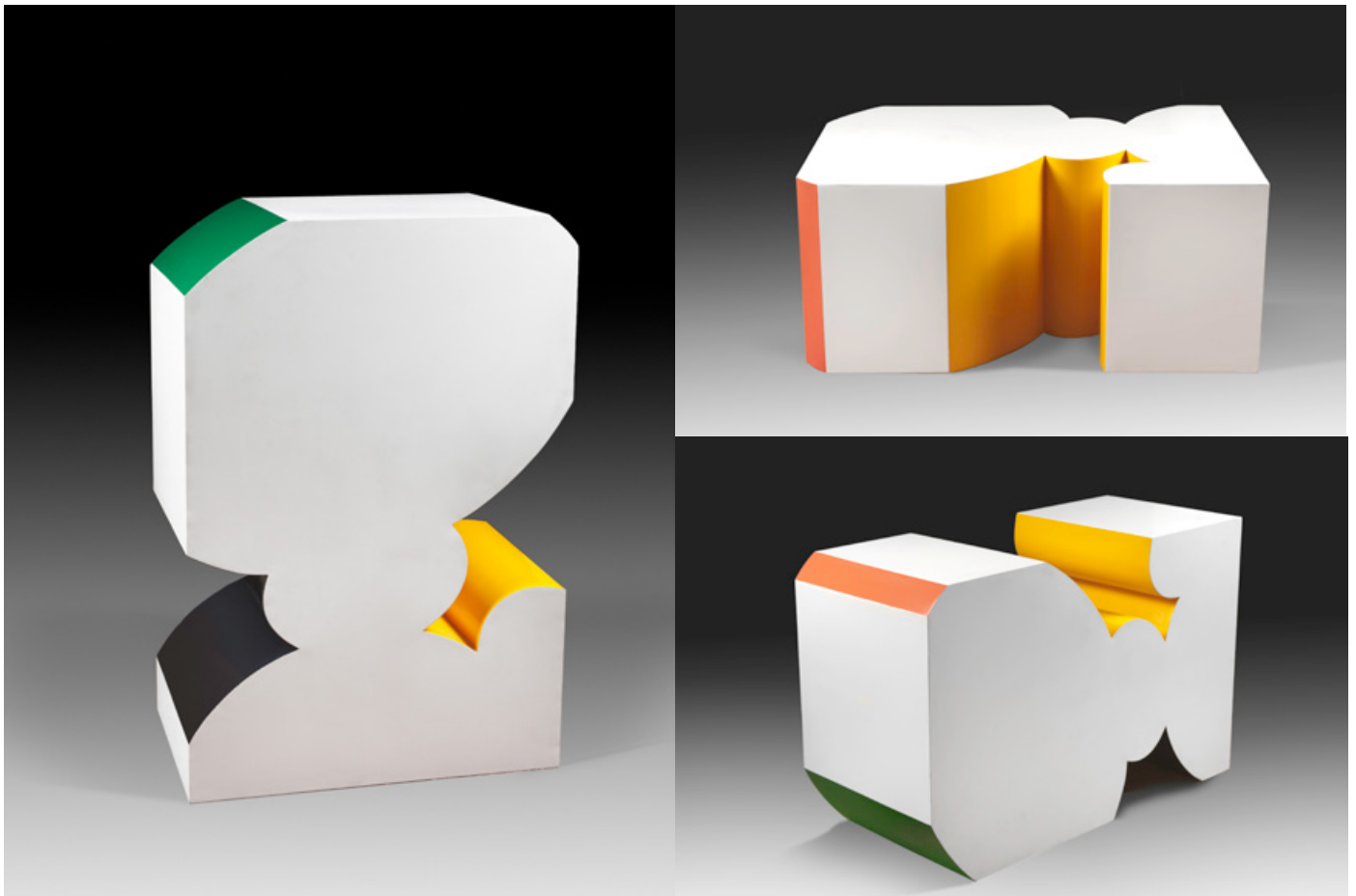


DIANE DE POLIGNAC

ART COMES TO YOU NO.14

ROUGEMONT *Volume, 1967*

By Astrid de Monteverde



ROUGEMONT
Volume - 1967
Aluminium & lacquer
H 150 x L 80 x P 50 cm
Unique piece
Diane de Polignac Gallery, Paris

ROUGEMONT: A “LONE RIDER”

Rougemont is an artist at a crossroads, working at the intersection of artistic trends from the second half of the 20th century. Bridging the frontier between Pop Art and Minimalism, Rougemont’s body of work reflects his desire for art to be open to everyone and created for everyone to appreciate—for the democratisation of art. To this aim, the artist’s work has invaded both private and public spaces, leaving the world of cultural institutions to populate cities and their outskirts. Marring art with architecture and town planning, the “environments” Rougemont has created include an installation alongside a section of the A4 motorway in France, as well as his famous *Totem* poles and other monumental sculptures that can be found all around the world—in Paris and Villeurbanne in France, as well as Hakone in Japan, Quito in Ecuador, the principality of Andorra, Taiwan, Dubai and Puerto Rico, among other locations.



ROUGEMONT
Environnement pour une autoroute, [Environment for a Motorway], detail, 1970, A4 motorway, France



ROUGEMONT
Totem, 1981
Place Albert Thomas, Villeurbanne, France

Rougemont has always rejected labels. His friendships and encounters transcend the confines of artistic movements and groups. During his time in New York from 1965 to 1966, Rougemont met Andy Warhol and Robert Indiana. A socially engaged artist, Rougemont met Gilles Aillaud and most importantly Eduardo Arroyo—who became a very close friend—in Paris in

the midst of the social and cultural events of May 1968. These encounters brought him closer to the Narrative Figuration movement. He also met Vincent Bioulès, who was associated with the Supports/Surfaces group, among other figures. But Rougemont led the charge of his artistic revolution alone. Rougemont’s work stems from the ambiguity of these two characteristics: his openness to and ability to absorb influences from the major movements of the second half of the 20th century, combined with the biased position of an artist who is, or wants to be, a “lone rider”, to use Adrien Goetz’s expression. The geometry of forms in Rougemont’s complex, abstract work may well echo the works of Jean Dewasne—the master of constructive abstraction.



ROUGEMONT
4 volumes, 1967
Lacquered wood, 120 x 120 x 80 cm
Unique piece



JEAN DEWASNE
Huit et demi, 1968
Glycerophthalic paint on melamine, 162 x 244 cm
Musée d’Art moderne de Paris, Paris

Rougemont has also expressed another desire: that of breaking down the barriers between different artistic disciplines. Elected a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, he has championed this very idea within that prestigious institution. Art, for him, is a whole. As such, Rougemont has succeeded in bringing the arts together to form a symbiosis, uniting painting, sculpture, monumental art and decorative arts to form a whole, a universe in its own right. Discussing the artist, Renaud Faroux wrote: “Guy de Rougemont has invented a universe made of cylindrical forms, ellipses, totems and serpentine lines that provide a colourful symbiosis between Minimalism and Pop Art.”

ROUGEMONT'S YOUTH AND EDUCATION

Rougemont was born in Paris in 1935. Among his ancestors was the General Baron Lejuene, the only battle painter to work under Napoleon I. At the age of 16, Rougemont spent a year in Washington D.C. with his family. His father, an officer, was appointed to work at the Pentagon in the context of the Atlantic Treaty. Rougemont then attended the École Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris from 1954 to 1958 where he was a pupil of Marcel Gromaire. With this post-Cubist artist, Rougemont learned at this early stage that "every straight line must be compensated for by a curve and vice-versa" (Jérôme Bindé). While he was still a student, Rougemont participated in the exhibition *Découvrir* at the Galerie Charpentier in 1955. A year later he entered the Prix Othon Friesz and in 1957, the Prix Fénéon. He then won a state grant to study at the Casa de Velázquez in Madrid, where he stayed from 1962 to 1964. He continued his education, soaking up the "curvilinear baroque" (Dominique Le Buhan) and built up the repertoire of shapes he would use in his future works. During his stay, Rougemont met the artists Jean Degottex, Jean Dupuy and Manuel Viola among others.



On the roof of the studio, 1972

From left to right, standing: Pierre Baudard, Rougemont, Christian Gadras; seated: José Alvarez, Merri Jolivet, Éric Seydoux, Jacques Pesant, X., Philippe Denis.

VISIT TO NEW YORK: AND ENCOUNTER WITH AMERICAN POP ART AND MINIMALISM

Rougemont's first solo exhibition took place across the Atlantic at the D'Arcy Galleries in New York, in 1962. He returned to the USA in 1965 and spent a year in New York. He met Andy Warhol and Robert Indiana during his stay in the city. It was through his contact with American artists and Minimalism that Rougemont opened up to large-format acrylic painting, appreciating the strength of simplified, pared-down forms and the power of colour applied in large flat areas. In 1966, a second solo exhibition of his work was held in New York, this time at the Byron Gallery. The Permanent Secretary of the Institut de France, Arnaud d'Hauterives, underlined his stay a few decades later during the ceremony at which Rougemont was officially received into the Académie des Beaux-Arts: "This period was for you a revelation,

you received there a 'true lesson' from the great French painters you admire, Léger, Matisse, Bonnard, but seen by a different eye, in other words, purified of all veneer." Naturally, on his return to France, Rougemont assimilated the developments in American painting and the heritage of the great French masters into his work.

THE MEETING OF AUTOMOBILES AND PAINTING: ROUGEMONT'S FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH AN ARTISTIC ENVIRONMENT

On his return to Paris and at the request of Gérard Gaveau, one of his friends who was head of advertising for Fiat cars, Rougemont created his first personal artistic environment in 1967, which was installed in the Fiat showroom on the Champs-Élysées in Paris. In this unexpected location and with an ephemeral setting, the painter Rougemont showed his recent large-format paintings on canvas. In an audacious move, Rougemont's art, in the wake of Balla and Italian Futurism, came face to face with automobile design. This "was a first stroke of genius" according to Adrien Goetz: "he installed works among the cars, in majesty, on the Champs-Élysées, in a first attempt at placing art in the lives of those passing by, to devoting himself to his love of large spaces, of combining inside and outside." And Renée Beslon-Degottex added: "It was a question of seeing whether, confronted with the perfection of a manufactured object, enjoying the prestige and advantages of sophisticated industrial techniques and the seduction of luxurious materials, the painting, humble in its own material of wood stretcher and raw canvas visible in some areas, poor in its craftsmanship, could still 'hold up'."



The meeting of automobiles and painting
Fiat showroom, Champs-Élysées, Paris, 1967

ROUGEMONT AND HIS VOLUME WORKS

It was during this period of artistic experimentation and in the context of the vibrant creative scene of the 1960s that Rougemont explored his first polychromatic works in volume—the direct result of the projection of his canvas works onto a three-dimensional surface. They were also the result of a more general reflection on the sculptural object, made using everyday, even industrial materials. Exploring the plastic arts, Rougemont played with forms and volumes. His new work presented echoes of Pop Art sculptors such as Robert Indiana and American Minimalist artists such as Donald Judd, Carl André and Robert Morris. Radicalising forms and reducing them to their pure essentials, Rougemont opted for a colourful approach—working in white lacquered aluminium accentuated sporadically with colour. These Volume works were presented in a solo exhibition at the Galerie Suzy Langlois in Paris in 1969.

VOLUME (1967), UNIQUE PIECE BY ROUGEMONT

The 1967 *Volume* piece presented here is a unique, landmark work. A direct testament to Rougemont's essential work, this large white aluminium sculpture plays on the exploration of space and its function. Standing at a height of 1.5 m when stood on one of its ends, the piece takes on the appearance of a table-sculpture when laid on its side, a precursor to the artist's now legendary *Cloud table*—a table-sculpture designed and created in 1970 at the request of Henri Samuel, the famous French designer—which also represents a playful approach to reflections on form and space.



DONALD JUDD
 Untitled, 1991
 Lacquered aluminium, 150 x 750 x 165 cm
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York



ROUGEMONT
Volume - 1967
 Aluminium & lacquer
 H 150 x L 80 x P 50 cm
 Unique piece
 Diane de Polignac Gallery, Paris



ROBERT INDIANA
Love, 1976
 Monumental sculpture
 Philadelphie



ROUGEMONT
Cloud table, c.1971
 Brass and plexiglas, 46 x 140 x 111 cm



ROUGEMONT
 Volumes in lacquered cardboard, 1969
 Exhibition at the Galerie Suzy Langlois, Paris

This *Volume* work from 1967 also testifies to the exploration of form present in Rougemont's work. Taking on a free form, the piece oscillates between straight and curved lines, its corners never definitively angular. The landmark *Volume* piece reveals two of the key shapes that Rougemont would develop a fondness for in his later work: the curve, which has inspired the artist's ellipses and serpentine lines; and the straight line, which has prompted the artist to explore cylinders and woven surfaces in his work.

The artist uses colour to punctuate the surface and form of the piece, as he did in his canvas works of the 1960s. Touches of green, black, yellow and orange adorn this *Volume*, like the exposed and hidden passages of a work of object that is revealed little by little, inviting the viewer to move around and interact with the piece.

A fundamental piece in Rougemont's creative body of work, this 1967 *Volume* represents the springboard of the artist's exploration of geometric form, which has taken him from ellipses to cylinders and then from woven surfaces to serpentine lines. The piece, above all, stems from the artist's work as a painter. As the artist himself recalls: "One does not pass with impunity from planes to volumes, from objects to monumental art, without one day all of this merging into one and the same practice. I am a painter: my sculptures, furniture pieces and rugs are all the works of a painter..."



ROUGEMONT
Untitled, 1965
 Vinyl paint on canvas, 146 x 97 cm
 Diane de Polignac Gallery, Paris



ROUGEMONT
Volume - 1967
 Aluminium & lacquer
 H 150 x L 80 x P 50 cm
 Unique piece
 Diane de Polignac Gallery, Paris



ROUGEMONT
Oui, 1965
 Vinyl paint on canvas, 146 x 97 cm
 Diane de Polignac Gallery, Paris