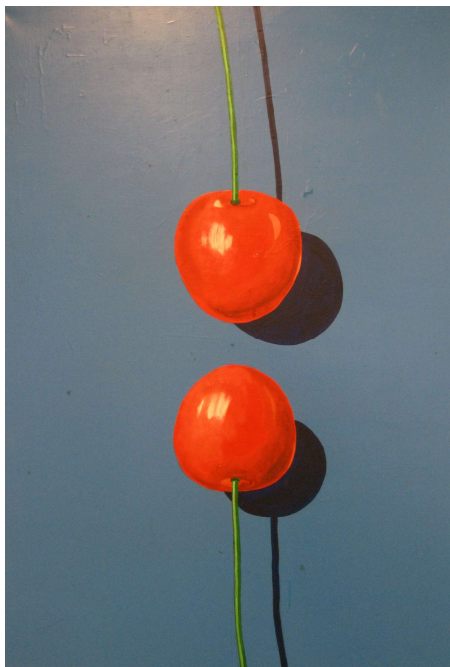


**JACQUES HALBERT
CERISES
CHÂTEAU DE MONTSOREAU
MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
10.07 - 13.11.2020**



Jacques Halbert, *Alignement*, acrylic on canvas, 1975



Jacques Halbert, lacquer painting, 1975

« The subject may not be so essential, which is why I could paint cherries all my life.»

Pornography-proof monochrome

In 1975, when he was twenty years old, Jacques Halbert wrote a founding text of his artistic approach: "How to paint a cherry". In it, he describes step by step the process of making a cherry painting, before maliciously concluding: "If you have followed these instructions to the letter, you have before your eyes a beautiful cherry painted by you. So you are an artist." This text is doubly groundbreaking, firstly because Jacques Halbert will indeed paint this cherry tirelessly all his life, but also because he sees his painting as a tool to fundamentally change the relationship that people traditionally have with the work of art.

The "cherry" subject is banal, even distressing if we place it in the context of the art world of the 1970s, when minimal art and conceptual art reigned as undisputed masters. Yet everyone loves cherries. They herald summer, childhood parties, they are bright, juicy, sweet, red. It is also a feminine name, its shapes are suggestive, and its colour brings back the colour of lacquered leather. Confronting the cherry with the most sophisticated painting that modern art has produced, i.e. monochrome, will become for Jacques Halbert the missing link between art and life. From then on, Jacques Halbert never ceases to test, destabilise and weaken the monochrome with this systematic method of surgical precision. He declines this figurative motif according to regular rhythms or random compositions, and for forty-five years has been pursuing a

minimalist work that engages the visitor in a profound redefinition of painting.



Jacques Halbert, *Il aime les cerises*, 1977

The cherry, at first glance candid, is a bearer of violence that is underlined by its carmine red colour, the colour of danger. Like a drop of indelible blood, or a spot of lipstick on an immaculate surface, it is the forbidden gesture that shakes the purity of the monochrome, taking away its mystery, desacralizing the painting.

This duality of the cherry is stated by Jacques Halbert as follows: "The subject may not be so essential, that's why I can paint cherries all my life. " Essaimed on the monochrome, like so many mines on a wasteland, they are the prolegomena of a radical conception of contemporary painting.

Jacques Halbert's work is marked by the ambivalence of language and the world. His departure for the United States only amplifies the confusion. While in France this motif is erotic in addition to being a feminine first name, in the United States the word "Cherry" designates at the same time the fruit, but also very precisely the sex of the woman. The monochromatic chaste is the victim of pornographic attacks which consist in "painting cherries, everywhere, all the time, and thinking only about it". The tail of the cherry, always associated with the fruit, complicates and amplifies the pornographic scope of the

work, as in *Il aime les cerises* (1977) where the gender of the model, although clearly stated in the title, is questioned by its representation.



Jacques Halbert, *Fashion Passion*, 1983

The good taste

His penchant for staging his character provoked immediate support from the Fluxus and Eat Art artists of New York, but the density of his individual mythology makes it difficult to link him to an artistic movement.

Owner successively of the *Art Café* in New York (1985) which became the meeting place of the artistic avant-garde (Ben Vautier, Jeff Koons, Daniel Spoerri, Andy Warhol, François Morellet...), then of the *Magnifik Gallery* in Brooklyn where he exhibited Nicolas L., Olivier Mosset, Carolee Schneemann or Alison Knowles, Jacques Halbert never ceases to undo and deconstruct the dominant idea of the artist as a prescriber of good taste. His work, free and freed from conventions, parodies and denounces the bourgeois conception of art according to which the artist is the guarantor of a definition of Beauty. He himself defines this neo-dadaist posture as "a manifesto of good taste".

Just a bowl of cherries

Jacques Halbert creates a prolific, lively and festive work that questions the value of art, its interest or importance. Simply confronting art and life, his work plunges the visitor into a journey towards permanent creation. In the film made during the New York Fashion Show, in the creative effervescence of the New York underground of the 1980s, the body replaces the monochrome and serves as a medium for painting, creating a confusion between eroticism, village party and gender.

Questioning the mysteries of art and life, with a seriousness never devoid of humour, allows him to evoke the limits of our condition and the role of the artist in the creative process.

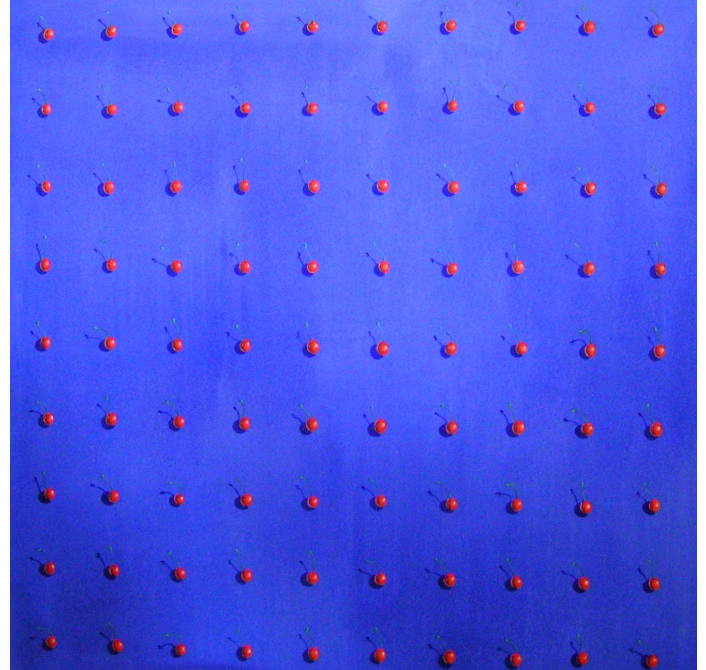
We would be tempted to conclude, as in the song *Life is just a bowl of cherries* : "Don't take it serious / it's too mysterious ".

Jacques Halbert . Cerises

Conceived by Alain Julien-Laferrière as deliberately non-retrospective, Jacques Halbert's monographic exhibition, *Cerises*, at the Château de Montsoreau – Museum of contemporary art d'art, offers visitors a plunge into the heart of the work of a personality outside the norm of contemporary art, marked by the artist's interventions in the public space and his confrontations with monochrome. From the archives, drawings and sketches in the first room to the in situ and all over intervention in the last room, the exhibition develops the work of Jacques Halbert, complex, free and breaking the codes of modern painting. It shows the tireless repetition of the motif, the shifts, the variations, and specifies its role in the investigations and the work of Jacques Halbert.



Jacques Halbert, oil on canvas, 2012



Jacques Halbert, acrylic on canvas, 2005

JACQUES HALBERT

CERISES

July 10th – November 13th 2020

Curator : Alain Julien-Laferrière

Open 7j/7j from 10 a.m to 7 p.m

presse.chateaudemontsoreau@gmail.com

tel. +33 (0)2 41 67 12 60

www.chateau-montsoreau.com