



Alain Jacquet, *La danse (The Dance)*, 1995, digital print and acrylic on canvas, 5' 6 7/8" × 11' 5".

## Alain Jacquet

PERROTIN | PARIS

Born near Paris, Alain Jacquet decamped to New York in 1964 in his mid-twenties. Seen as a French artist in his adoptive home and lumped in with American Pop by the French, Jacquet, who died in 2008, was ultimately underappreciated on both sides of the Atlantic. The recent miniretrospective “*Jeux de Jacquet*” (Jacquet’s Games) framed the artist’s best-known work—paintings and silk screens inspired by Édouard Manet’s *Le déjeuner sur l’herbe*, 1863—within a career-long exploration of how reproduction (manual and mechanical) reveals the continual intertwining of abstraction and representation.

The earliest paintings on view, from 1961 to 1962, were based on popular nineteenth-century French prints known as *images d’Épinal*. Reduced to abstract compositions of red, yellow, blue, green, orange, and purple (inspired by the colors of his childhood backgammon set, or *le jacquet*, as the game is called in French), these works established the artist’s preoccupation with mass-produced images. Soon, Jacquet found a better way to hide representation. The paintings in his “Camouflage” series, 1962–64, integrate two or more existent images—famous artworks and kitsch pop-culture artifacts alike—into a single composition evoking colorful military fatigues. Made in response to the Algerian War of Independence, these works nonetheless say more about American Pop than they do about French colonialism: After meeting Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol in 1961 or ’62, Jacquet began inserting cartoon characters into the patterns, as in *Camouflage Walt Disney (Donald Watching TV)*, 1963. In homage to Lichtenstein’s homage to Picasso, Jacquet made *Camouflage Lichtenstein/Picasso, Femme dans un*

*fauteuil*, 1963, in which the hidden image is Lichtenstein's *Woman with Flowered Hat*, 1963, a painting that was itself inspired by one of Picasso's portraits of Dora Maar sitting in an armchair. Such musings on originality and art history would burgeon as Jacquet turned to Mec art (mechanical art) processes such as silk screen and digital printing.

The show's climax was *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*, 1964, a four-color silk screen showing a poolside picnic where a party of four appears in roughly the formation (and state of dress/undress) seen in Manet's painting. From this print, based on Jacquet's photograph of his art-world cohort (with a loaf of Jacquet-brand bread in the foreground), the artist produced a body of work spanning multiple mediums and several years. It is telling that Jacquet chose Manet's painting as his point of departure—in addition to being an iconic image, the nineteenth-century masterpiece was itself predicated on a preexisting image of a preexisting image, an engraving based on Raphael's *Judgment of Paris*, ca. 1510–20.

At Perrotin, *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* was presented almost ceremoniously, flanked by eight freestanding framed silk screens of the enlarged face of one of the picnickers, artist Mario Schifano. Each print in the set of ten (all titled *Portrait d'homme* [Man's Portrait] and dated either 1964/2018 or 1964/2021) features a unique three-color separation with the colors printed on separate sheets of Plexiglas spaced a few centimeters apart. With their large half-tone dots and three-dimensional presence, these portraits approach abstraction while making visible the tricolor printing process. *Portrait de Jeannine*, 1965, a zoom-in on the nude picnicker (gallerist Jeannine de Goldschmidt), is not a silk screen, but a painting of quarter-size Benday dots. More abstract still, *Limite entre le béton et l'eau* (The Boundary Between Concrete and Water), 1965, magnifies a minuscule section of the source photograph—as the title specifies, a small area of the pool between the concrete and the water—beyond recognition. The colorful overlapping blobs harken back to the “Camouflage” paintings.

Having dissected *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*, Jacquet later pivoted toward more expansive subjects. In paintings and silk screens from the 1970s through the '90s—many of which were inspired by early NASA photographs—the artist identified outer space as another potential nexus for abstraction and representation. The cosmos, however, may be too vast a subject. In stark contrast to the thrilling sense of possibility that dominates Jacquet's early career, these late works featuring stars, galaxies, and, most frequently,

doughnut-shaped planets convey a looming apeirophobia.

— Mara Hoberman

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