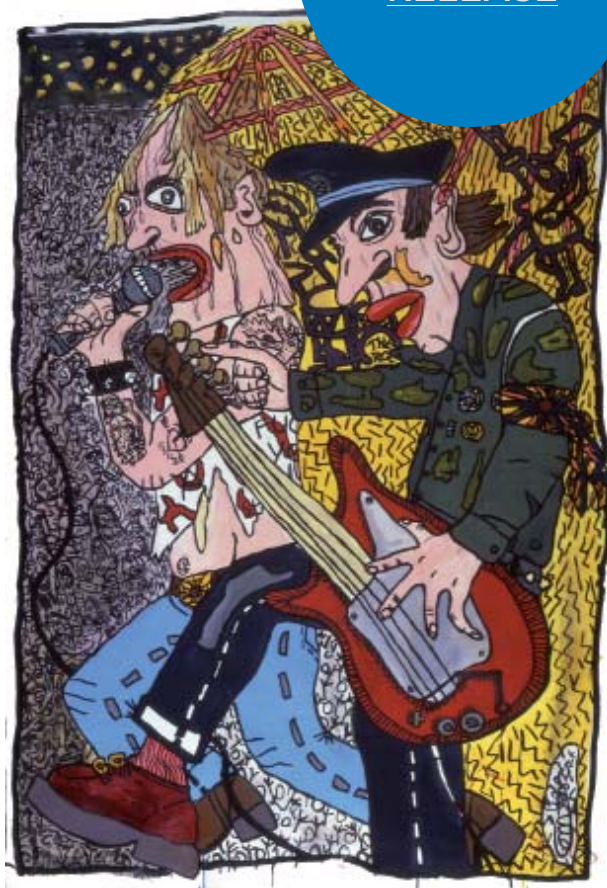


The mac^{LYON} presents: *Greatest Hits,* **ROBERT COMBAS**

RETROSPECTIVE

24.02 >
15.07.2012

PRESS
RELEASE



Robert COMBAS, *HARDROCK*, 1985
Acrylic on canvas - 155 x 104 cm
Private collection
© Adagp, Paris, 2011

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musée
d'art contemporain
de Lyon

THE EXHIBITION

The mac^{LYON} presents:

Robert Combas *Greatest Hits*

February 24 to July 15 2012

The first large retrospective dedicated to the work of Robert Combas who declares his painting to be "rock music". The *Greatest Hits exhibition*, accompanied by a soundtrack taken from the artist's extensive music collection and by exclusive live performances, showcases over 200 works from the 1970s to the present day.

This "rock on the good & bad side" exhibition extends over a 3000 square metre space. Robert Combas will be present daily in a specially installed workshop and recording studio where he will paint and create eclectic video clips.

Greatest Hits gathers together works chosen from public and private collections throughout Europe, the United States and Asia. The exhibition follows a chronological and thematic route, to the strains of the music that has forever accompanied the work of the artist. On the third floor, a scene is built for the exhibition, on which Combas' musical creations are presented on a regular basis. The artist, accompanied by musicians, will regularly perform live throughout the duration of this exhibition. Furthermore, Robert Combas will continue to create works in a specially designed studio space where he will welcome art professionals, friends and the general public...

Museum curator:
Thierry Raspail, mac^{LYON} Director

Exhibition curator:
Richard Leydier, art critic

Artist website: www.combas.com

/ « FEELING IS RHYTHM, IT'S THE MAD DRUMMER IN THE JUNGLE AND VODOO DANCES; IT'S THE ROLLING STONES COPYING OLD TUNES FROM BLACK BLUESMEN AND WITHOUT INTENDING TO, CREATING NEW MUSIC. PAINTING IS A BIT LIKE THAT FOR ME, IT'S ABOUT RHYTHM... MY PAINTING IS ROCK MUSIC. » /

ROBERT COMBAS



Robert COMBAS, *BONCHOIR MÉCHIEU, FAUCHOIR MESDAMES !*, 1984
Acrylic on canvas - 205 x 196 cm
Private collection
© Adagp, Paris, 2011

Curator, Richard Leydier, talks about the exhibition:

Leading figure of a movement that Ben entitled *Figuration libre*, (Free figuration: movement included artists such as Rémi Blanchard, François Boisrond, Hervé and Richard Di Rosa) Robert Combas creates since the end of the 1970s.

This exhibition, combining rock music and contemporary art, covers all aspects of a rich and abundant body of work: painting of course, as well as sculpture, drawing, and other artistic practices that Combas himself refers to as "satellites", where the artist transforms images by other artists and which develop alongside the "trademark Combas style".

Various iconic themes will be illustrated by works dating from the 1970s to the present day, such as women, religion, love, death, war, southern roots... and music.

The exhibition allows the viewer to appreciate the fusion that he draws from the diversity of his media, techniques, formats and themes and his consistent approach in terms of constant experimentation.

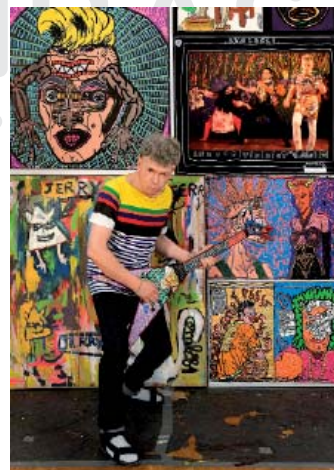
Although Robert Combas is known for his painting, his music however, is less well-known. In Lyon, a special "cabaret space" will be created where the artist's musical shows and videos will be revealed for the first time. For Combas, music is not confined to being merely the subject of his paintings. Founder of rock group *Les Démodés* at the end of the 70s, the artist has never strayed very far from music; he has continued to play music and more so these past two years, collaborating with Lucas Mancione. Both have established a varied repertoire which they perform on surprising video clips. In the paintings, we will see key figures from the history of rock and other colourful figures such as the Velvet Underground, Georges Brassens and South American cheerleaders and conga players.

CHOICE OF WORKS

The press is allowed to use freely the photography of Robert Combas' work sent by the macLYON as part of the Robert Combas Retrospective, and this for the articles on this exhibition.

These works may be published on the following conditions:

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- For online press publications, the definition file is limited to 400 x 400 pixels and the resolution must not exceed 72 DPI.



Robert COMBAS
© Photo Harald Gottschalk
© Adagp, Paris, 2011



Robert COMBAS, GREATEST HITS DU MONDE COMBAS, 1986
Acrylic on canvas - 214 x 213 cm
Collection Lambert, Avignon
© Adagp, Paris, 2011



Robert COMBAS, Gonflant avec coque, 2008
Mixed media on photo, argentic edition - 114 x 152 cm
© Adagp, Paris, 2011

Robert COMBAS, L'autiste dans la forêt de fleurs (détail), 1991
Acrylic on canvas - 216 x 518 cm
Collection of the artist
© Adagp, Paris, 2011



Les Sans pattes:
Robert Combas - Lucas Mancione, 2011
Image from the video:
«Je suis le Général de l'armée des déçus de la vie»



Robert COMBAS, LES PETITS GRAILLONS (EN SOUVENIR), 2009
Acrylic on canvas - 155 x 104 cm
Private collection
© Adagp, Paris, 2011

BIOGRAPHY



Robert COMBAS
© Photo Ketty Brindel
© Adagp, Paris, 2011

1957 > Robert Combas was born in Lyon. He spends his childhood and adolescence in Sète.

/« I USED TO DRAW ALL THE TIME, AS IF BY INSTINCT, AUTOMATICALLY. I NEVER STOPPED DRAWING AND WHEN I WAS AROUND 6 OR 7 MY PARENTS TOLD ME THAT IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR ME TO STUDY ART AND SO THEY TOOK ME TO ART SCHOOL... AND THAT'S HOW I ENDED UP STUDYING ART FROM THE AGE OF 7 OR 8 UNTIL THE AGE OF 23. »/

/« I ALWAYS LIKED ILLUSTRATIONS, CARTOONS, LIKE PIF (SPIFF) THE DOG OR TINTIN... THE NEWSPAPER THAT MY FATHER READ ALSO INFLUENCED ME A LOT AND I DID CARICATURES INSPIRED BY THE NEWSPAPER LE CANARD ENCHAÎNÉ... »/

1974 À 1977 > Sète Fine Arts School, where he meets Di Rosa and then the Montpellier Fine Arts School.

/« IN 1977, I WAS IN CONTACT WITH THE YOUNG HIP MUSOS AMONGST WHOM THERE WAS A CERTAIN DEGREE OF CREATIVITY. IT WAS A PERIOD THAT WAS A BIT PUNK, LOTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WERE ATTRACTED TO ANIMATION. IN THE FINE ARTS COLLEGES, THERE WERE ONLY A FEW OLD FASHIONED HIPPIES WHO WERE INFLUENCED BY THE SUPPORTS/SURFACES MOVEMENT OR BY THEIR TEACHERS. I HAD CHOSEN PAINTING BUT TOWARDS THE END OF MY FIRST YEAR, I SAID TO MYSELF THAT I WOULD HAVE TO DO SOMETHING NEW. I ALWAYS WANTED TO DO SOMETHING COMPLETELY NEW, I ALWAYS NEEDED TO DO SOMETHING THAT MADE ME STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD. »/

1978 > He sets up the rock group *Les Démodés* with Hervé Di Rosa, Hervé's brother Richard (aka Buddy) and Ketty Brindel.

1979 > Influenced by rock magazines, he publishes the fanzine *Bato* with Hervé Di Rosa and Ketty Brindel. One hundred handmade copies of the fanzine, made up of photography collages, drawings and texts, are printed. Four editions of the magazine are published.

1980 > A recent graduate, he draws the attention of Bernard Ceysson, member of the jury and director of the Saint Etienne Museum of Modern Art who asks him to take part in the *Après le classicisme (After Classicism)* exhibition at the end of 1981.

/« WHEN I ASKED HIM WHY HE PROPOSED ME TO TAKE PART IN THIS EXHIBITION, HE TOLD ME THAT THERE WAS NO ONE ELSE DOING THIS TYPE OF PAINTING IN FRANCE. »/

/« [...] IN THIS DAY AND AGE, WHEN THE CONCEPT IS ALL IMPORTANT, A TROUBLEMAKER WITH A WILD STREAK INVADDED THE ARTISTIC SCENE AND SWEEPED UP THE GRAMMATOLOGICAL DEVICES EXHAUSTED BY THE WAIT FOR THE DAWN OF AN IMPROBABLE REVOLUTION... [...] »/

BERNARD CEYSSON, EXTRACT FROM A TEXT FOR THE EXHIBITION *ROBERT COMBAS, Qu'Es Aco*, THE VAN GOGH FOUNDATION, ARLES 2008

1981 > Ben exhibits Robert Combas and Hervé Di Rosa and invents the term *Figuration libre* (Free figuration). This movement is inspired by popular culture (reviews, cartoon strips, videos, games) as well as by rock, punk and funk music.

/« FREE FIGURATION REFERRED TO TWO THINGS: THE FIRST WAS ABOUT MAKING A BRIDGE BETWEEN ART, CONTEMPORARY ART AND THE PEOPLE WHO LOOKED AT ART. THE SECOND WAS THAT AFTER DUCHAMP AND BUREN, THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE TO BE DONE. IN SUCH A CONTEXT, THE ONLY THING THAT COULD BE DONE WAS TO HAVE FUN AND TO TRY AND PAINT SOMETHING... IT WAS AS SIMPLE AS THAT. »/

/« FREE FIGURATION IS ABOUT DOING WHAT YOU WANT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, MAKING IT YOURS AND DOING SO AS FREELY AS POSSIBLE. »/

Bernard Lamarche-Vadel organizes the first significant exhibition dedicated to Free figuration in Paris, *Finir en beauté*. The exhibit showcases the works of Rémi Blanchard, François Boisrond, Hervé Di Rosa and Robert Combas. Suzanne Pagé is impressed by Combas and Di Rosa and exhibits them at the Paris Museum of Modern Art as part of the *Ateliers 81/82* exhibition.

Robert Combas and Hervé Di Rosa are exhibited in Dusseldorf and Amsterdam...

Combas moves to Paris.

Simultaneously in 1980s Italy, Germany, the US and France, a new generation emerges. Their painting is infused with a new energy, influenced by rock music, experimentation, a new form of existentialism and immediacy... (see page 5)

1982 > In New York, Otto Hahn organizes an exhibition called *Statements New York 82 - Leading Contemporary Artists from France* which features Blanchard, Combas, Di Rosa, Boisrond alongside Keith Haring (the mac^{LYON} devoted a retrospective to Haring in 2008), Tseng Kwong Chi, Kenny Scharf, etc.

1982 À 1985 > Numerous overseas exhibitions; New York, London, Pittsburgh...

1983 > *Figures imposées Winter 83* exhibition at the ELAC Lyon Contemporary Art Space.

First solo exhibition in New York at the Leo Castelli Gallery.

1984 > First art publication dedicated to Combas with a preface by Catherine Millet: *L'enfance de l'art*.

1985 > *5/5 Figuration libre, France /USA* Exhibition organised by Otto Hahn and Hervé Perdrille at the Paris Museum of Modern Art featuring Rémi Blanchard, François Boisrond, Robert Combas, Hervé and Richard Di Rosa, Louis Jammes, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Crash, Keith Haring, Tseng Kwong Chi, Kenny Scharf...

1986 > Solo exhibition at the Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.

1987 > Solo exhibition *Peintures 1985 - 1987* at the CAPC Bordeaux. The exhibition travels to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

1988 À 1994 > His paintings become darker, more synthetic: *L'autiste dans la forêt de fleurs (An autistic person in a forest of flowers)*, 1991 is exhibited at the first Lyon Biennial *L'amour de l'Art (The love of Art)* the same year.

1995 À 2000 > Robert Combas devotes himself to photography and sculpture.

2000 À 2011 > Guy Pieters regularly exhibits Combas and supports his production of large scale works, notably for the *Mots d'oreille (Ear Tags)* exhibition presented in Venice in 2005 (Magazzini del sale).

In 2006, the exhibition *Savoir Faire, Robert Combas (Know-how)* is shown at the Seoul Museum of Art and the Asiana Museum of Daejeon, Korea.

In 2009, exhibition *Robert Combas, Le frimeur flamboyant (The flamboyant show-off)* at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie, (European House of Photography) in Paris.

In 2010, exhibition entitled *Sans filet, les Goulamas sont dans le trou (Without a net - Fallen Angels)* at the Guy Pieters Gallery in Paris.

SOME LANDMARKS

THE INTERNATIONAL ARTISTIC CONTEXT

THE US

1978 > «*Bad Painting*» appears for the first time in the title of an exhibition dedicated to Neil Jenney at the New Museum in New York. It refers to a generation of artists such as: Julian Schnabel, Keith Haring, Kenny Scharf, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Donald Sultan... From 1979 to 1982 these artists participate in numerous international exhibitions: in London *A New Spirit in Painting* (1981), Berlin *Zeitgeist* (1982) and Kassel *Documenta 7* (1982).

ITALY

1979 > Achille Bonito-Oliva publishes one of the first essays defining «Transavantguardia» in *Flash Art*.
1980 > He invites Mimmo Paladino, Sandro Chia, Francesco Clemente, Enzo Cucchi and Nicola de Maria to Aperto' 80 at the Venice Biennial. The «Transavantguardia» is soon exhibited in numerous European museums; Kunsthalle in Basel, Folkwang Museum in Essen and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 80/81.

GERMANY

1980 > Wolfgang Becker refers to the exhibition dedicated to Anselm Kiefer, Georg Baselitz, Markus Lupertz and A. R. Penck at the New Aix-la-Chapelle Gallery as «Die Neuen Wilden», the «new Fauvism».
That same year, Klaus Gallwitz chooses Kiefer and Baselitz to represent Germany at the 39th International Art Biennial in Venice.
The «new Fauvism painters» or «German neo-expressionists» take part in numerous exhibitions: *Documenta 7*, Kassel (1982), *the International Kunstausstellung*, Berlin (1982)...

COMBAS AND MUSIC

Robert Combas is known as a painter but less well-known as a musician. A recording by Lucas Mancione (musician, visual artist and friend of Combas) of a song written by Combas and intended to accompany his exhibition at the Guy Pieters Gallery in 2010 marks the beginning of their collaboration.

/« GIVEN MY AGE, IT WAS ABOUT TIME TO RETURN TO WHAT HAD COLOURED MY ADOLESCENCE. I CAN SAFELY SAY THAT MUSIC SAVED MY LIFE. »/

From this pairing, the group *Les sans pattes (Legless)* is born and about forty songs are created.

/« LES SANS PATTES ARE DIY MULTI-INSTRUMENTALISTS WHO PLAY 'ECLECTIC MUSIC.' »/, says Lucas Mancione: /« PSYCHEDELIC ROCK, PUNK, ELECTRO, ITALIAN MUSIC, A MIX OF PHIL SPECTOR AND THE BEACH BOYS. AND HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY SUICIDE. »/ (The mac^{LYON} dedicates the first retrospective to the artwork of Suicide frontman Alan Vega in 2009.)

Music has always played a key role in Combas' work. In 1978, he sets up Les Démodés with Ketty Brindel and Buddy Di Rosa, a group known for their post-primitive sound and their post-dada style texts.

/« I AM A BORN PERCUSSIONIST. I PLAY A RHYTHM WITH MY INDEX AND MIDDLE FINGERS WHEN I HEAR A RECORD. I'M ALWAYS TAPPING OUT A RHYTHM ON WHATEVER'S CLOSE TO HAND. »/

Combas is also a collector:

« MY HOBBY IS COLLECTING ROCK ALBUMS ON VINYL FROM EVERY DECADE! ». Not surprisingly the *Greatest Hits* exhibition is accompanied by a selection of "hits" taken from Combas' extensive record collection.

COMBAS VU PAR...

HIMSELF:

/« FREE FIGURATION IS A STYLE OF PAINTING THAT DOES NOT DENY ITS PRIMITIVE INSTINCTS AND THAT IS OPEN TO CULTURE. DADAISM, OUTSIDER ART, BLACK ART, THE ART OF NAÏVE PAINTERS/ADVERTISERS FROM HAITI, SOUTH AMERICA, JAMAICA, NAÏVE ART, ART PAUVRE, ROCK AND ROLL, ROCK CULTURE, DISABLED ARTISTS, PICASSO, EXPRESSIONISM, ANIMATION. WHEN YOU MIX EVERYTHING, YOU FIND COMBAS, A FIGURATIVE ARTIST BECAUSE HE LIVES IN REALITY. HOWEVER, THE MESSAGE OF MY PAINTING IS ABSTRACT. IT'S A MIX OF COLOURS, FALSE ASIAN SYMBOLS, ARABIC, SOUTH AMERICAN, A PAINTING THAT ATTEMPTS TO CREATE A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE. » /

CATHERINE MILLET, *ROBERT COMBAS, L'ENFANCE DE L'ART*, 1984

« COMBAS IS WHAT DADAISTS COULD ONLY PRETEND TO BE. HIS WORK, WHETHER WE CATEGORIZE IT AS PART OF THE GENERAL "RETURN TO PAINTING" MOVEMENT, COULD ALSO BE VAGUELY CLASSIFIED AS DADA. BY REFUSING ALL FORMS IMPOSED BY CULTURAL HISTORY, COMBAS' WORK USES THE STEREOTYPE. HIS CHARACTERS ARE THE COMMON DENOMINATOR OF POPULAR IMAGINATION: THOSE WHO ARE SEEN AS DATED DUE TO OVERUSE: THE SOLDIER, THE MUSCLE MAN, THE GIRL, THE HEROES WE JOKE ABOUT, TV GAGS – AND THOSE FROM HIS EARLIER DAYS THAT WE SEE IN COMIC STRIPS AND CARTOONS; SUPERWOMAN WITH ENORMOUS BREASTS AND A MACHINE GUN IN HER HAND, EVERY OBJECT AND EVERY PLANT HAVE HUMAN CHARACTERISTICS SUCH AS EYES, A MOUTH, LEGS. COMBAS ALSO INCLUDES THOSE FETISHIST OBJECTS THAT HANG ABOVE BEDS OR FROM REAR VIEW MIRRORS, OR THE TEDDY BEARS THAT OVERGROWN SENTIMENTAL SOULS CAN'T BEAR TO GET RID OF.

A LARGE NUMBER OF THESE FIGURES, IN THEIR CHARACTER AND ATTRIBUTES, ARE CLOSE TO OUTSIDER ART. BY EXAGGERATING STEREOTYPES THROUGH REPETITION AND THE ENLARGEMENT OF SYMBOLS, COMBAS' DRAWING REVEALS THE TRUTH OF SUCH STEREOTYPES, ONE OF THESE TRUTHS THAT MARGINAL ARTISTS, WHO ARE NOT SUBJECT TO THE SAME TABOOS OR CONSTRAINTS AS OTHERS, CAN REVEAL IN SUCH A CRUDE MANNER... [...] »

PHILIPPE DAGEN, *POSTFACE – CINQ ANS APRÈS*, 2010

« COMBAS STILL PRESERVES THE READABILITY OF THE MAIN FIGURE BY DRAWING THEIR CONTOURS IN BLACK. HE CONTINUES TO ENJOY PLAYING WITH MINIMIZED CHROMATIC DIFFERENCES AND DRAWING FOR EXAMPLE IN AN AZURE BLUE OVER A SLIGHTLY DARKER BLUE, SO THAT THE VIEWER'S GAZE WILL BE DRAWN TO PAUSING AND INTERPRETING – WHEN POSSIBLE – ALL THAT CAN BE FOUND IN HIS WORK. ADD TO THIS POEMS AND LEGENDS. »

VISITOR INFORMATION

Robert Combas *Greatest Hits*

February 24 to July 15 2012

Admissions

Full rate: 8 euros*
Concessions: 6 euros*
Free for visitors under 18

* Subject to modification

The exhibition

General Curatorship:
Thierry Raspail

Exhibition Curatorship:
Richard Leydier

Project manager:
Isabelle Bertolotti

Production manager:
Thierry Prat

Artistic assistants:
Nathalie Janin
Marilou Laneuville

Exhibition registrar:
Xavier Jullien

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Opening hours

Wednesday to Friday, from 11:00 to 18:00
Saturday and Sunday, from 10:00 to 19:00
(Subject to modification)

Accès

— By car: along "Quai Charles de Gaulle", follow "Cité Internationale", carparks

— By bus, Stop Musée d'art contemporain:
Line C1 Part-Dieu station > Cité internationale,
Line C4 Jean Macé > Cité internationale
change with metro A at Foch or metro B and D at Saxe-Gambetta
Line C5, Bellecour (via Hôtel de Ville) > Rillieux Sathonay Camp

— By bike: several Velo'v stations are located around the museum



Robert COMBAS
Photo Harald Gottschalk
© Adagp, Paris, 2011

/« COMBAS IS A CRAB CROONER /
COMBAS IS A DOG PISSING ON ART
/ COMBAS IS A RABBIT PAELLA /
COMBAS BRINGS DOWN BARRICADES
/ COMBAS IS A BITTER BOAR /
COMBAS IS JEALOUS OF JEALOUS
PEOPLE / COMBAS IS A CLIMBING
ROSEBUSH / COMBAS IS THE CHIEF
OF WILD FLEAS / COMBAS IS THE
WEALTHIEST OF THE POOR / COMBAS
IS A FOX AT BAY / COMBAS IS A
DC 8 ABOVE TOKYO / COMBAS IS
A YELLOW SILK TIE / COMBAS IS A
WEEPING LONE TIGER. »/

BEN, 1984

