

A Q&A with French Artist Anne-Marie Schneider



The Marcel Duchamp Prize was established by the Association pour la Diffusion Internationale de l'Art Français (ADIAF), whose mission is to promote French art on the world stage, in partnership with the Pompidou Center and FIAC, the annual contemporary art fair that will take place in the Louvres Cour Carrée from October 21 to 24 this year. Intended to encourage new creative expressions in contemporary art, the award comes with both money and prestige: a prize of 35,000 euros (45,000 dollars) and a solo show at the Pompidou Center next summer. ARTINFO France will interview the four artists nominated for the prize this year: Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, Cyprien Gaillard, Camille Henrot, and Anne-Marie Schneider.

After studying the violin, Anne-Marie Schneider decided at age 18 to drop music for art. She graduated from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1989.

Today she has an international presence and is part of a generation of rising stars in the contemporary art world. Since 1994 she's been represented by the Nelson-Freeman Gallery in Paris. ARTINFO France sat down with Schneider recently to talk about her career path, her upcoming show at FIAC, and the artistic benefits of boredom.

How do you situate yourself relative to the other nominees?

I really like Camille Henrot's work. There is a lot of intelligence in what she does. I recently saw the «Dynasty» show [the group exhibition at Paris's Museum of Modern Art and Palais de Tokyo] and her idea of rebuilding a wall and placing next to it the image of a maimed person who says to himself, «I won't go» — I really liked it. I appreciate this relationship between image and sculpture.

Do you feel as if you belong to a group of artists?

I don't think so, in that I am very much an individual. I don't see a trend applying to me. There is no one I really feel close to artistically, except [British artist] Stephen Wilks and [Belgian artist] Gert Verhoeven. We have developed a relationship of trust, sincerity, and deep friendship.

What artists inspire you?

There isn't any single one in particular. I really like the Dutch painter René Daniëls, Louise Bourgeois, and «Chute de Neige» («Snowfall») by Beuys. I am interested in a variety of things and I can't really place them in categories.

Your work is very personal and seems quite close to lived experience and emotion.

Do you create spontaneously, as if you were writing in a diary?

Yes, I start a lot of little drawings that are 32 by 38 centimeters (12.6 by 15 inches) without any specific idea in mind. Then, I stop, I think, I analyze, I add things... I work with the conscious and the unconscious at the same time while I develop a piece.

What themes do you address?

I don't know if it's possible to identify themes. I explore certain concerns and thoughts related to the condition of women, solitude, sexuality, politics... However, I'm not trying to describe specific theories when making my drawings. I represent the real in the most abstract way possible.

How do you approach your work?

At the beginning of my career, I worked rather irregularly and not for very long. I spent a lot of time looking at my drawing and asking myself if I was going to keep it. Today, I work mostly when I am bored, and since I'm bored a lot, I am very productive.

You've explored drawing, painting, sculpture, and Super-8 film. Do you have a favorite medium?

No, the medium is simply a technical and conceptual means of enacting specific ideas. For example, if I were to represent a guy floating in a swimming pool, I wouldn't do it with a drawing. I would choose film and I would use French fries and a soccer ball to make his face.

What are you up to right now?

In November, I started a project of several paintings based on the number 2. Then, I explored this theme in drawings. At FIAC, I'm going to show a group of 16 color drawings of different sizes, a drawing that is two meters (6.5 feet) long, and three large-scale drawings. I also just finished a series of little paintings that I may show too. Then I have a show at the Nelson-Freeman Gallery in November and perhaps another one at the Tracy Williams Gallery in New York.