STÉPHANE MANDELBAUM

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PORTRAIT DE PIERRE VALIVIANOVSKI
1983- BRUXELLES

STÉPHANE
MANDELBAUM

“I wanted to write my life in life.”
— Pierre Goldman

Driven by fascination as well as by contempt, Stéphane Mandelbaum (1961–1986) produced hundreds of portraits within a short creative period of just ten years. The subjects include Arthur Rimbaud, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Francis Bacon, Pierre Goldman, his grandfather Szulim, and his father Arié Mandelbaum, but also National Socialist criminals such as Joseph Goebbels and Ernst Röhm. Portraying them small and singly or larger than life-size, Mandelbaum sought to capture the essence of their characters with a ballpoint pen, oil paint, or a graphite or colored pencil, often adding scribbles, texts in French, Yiddish, Italian, or German, or collaged newspaper clippings. His Jewish descent, Belgium’s colonial history, but also the nightlife and underworld of Brussels, permeated his work at ever deeper levels and ultimately shaped his life—always driven by the questions: Where do I come from and what can I be?

A History of Violence in Europe since the Holocaust, Unfinished

Diedrich Diederichsen

More than half of Stéphane Mandelbaum's works visible today are portraits, and nearly all of them, even in those of a different structure or following other artistic genres, contain further collaged, integrated portraits. From 1975 to 1986, in the years in which he was active, that is, there were few artists who believed so strongly in the portrait as representation and likeness of a specific person. Other formats and media had taken over the task of registering and storing unmistakable traces of people. Even in the (art) photography of the era, between Cindy Sherman and Thomas Ruff, the portrait appears as an aspect of the culture industry and surveillance state, beyond the international reach of the individual artist: stereotypes, stars, and mugshots. And even if Mandelbaum's preferred drawing media and techniques—ink, pencil, charcoal, which were also not very relevant during the first half of the 1980s—were experiencing a revival, for example in the drawings of Raymond Pettibon that were no longer produced just for record covers but also for the art market or in the *Hotel Drawings* of Martin Kippenberger of the late 1980s and early 1990s, in parallel with an international comeback of the underground comic and caricature, few had faith in the portrait as a real reference. It remained a form of the reappropriation of stereotypes, pastiches, and so on that had been worn out by the culture industry. In a sense, people shied away from the visual use of proper and real names.

In Mandelbaum's case, by contrast, it went in the opposite direction. With the same fierceness and directness that he employed for self-portraits and portraits of his father, the famous Belgian artist Arié Mandelbaum, and of his grandfather, Szulim Mandelbaum, a Shoah survivor, he drew portraits of George Dyer and Pier Paolo Pasolini that were clearly based on press photos and other publicly accessible images but as if they were people close to him. In his work, Pasolini, who was often depicted in the second half of the 1970s, becomes a personally familiar, elusive character who, in the sum of his portraits by Mandelbaum, becomes a very private, fierce, difficult-to-understand, gruff, but also inimitable person with the gift of sarcastic wit. In all of these portraits as evocations,

very much against the contemporary postmodern irony, there are, despite the varied and usually very skillfully employed techniques, strange continuities: a penchant for potato noses, say, which one could understand in the Francis Bacon drawings but which continues in very different faces as an involuntary ungainliness that even the sharpest contours cannot compete with. Even stronger are the gazes that radiate beyond the frame of reference: fixing, desperate, triumphant, and always, above all, shocked looks, for example in *Portrait d'Annie*, who is identified in writing as a "homosexuel putain juive," supplemented by the multilingual inscription: "Mad in Polen." "Made"? So, from Poland? Or "maid"? Or simply "crazy" and/or "angry" in English? And why "Polen" in German?

He was dyslexic and a draftsman, enthusiastic about points of precision. I don't know whether there is a context, but it seems to me that precision in the details of iconic representation and virtuosic handling of the specific imprecision of symbolic signs (letters) do not go well together. Anyone who has difficulty with symbolic signs sees them as images, because he or she cannot remember them as arbitrary signs, so they have to be copied, imprinted visually. (The whole-language method with which reading used to be learned begins here.) There is nevertheless a lot of text in Mandelbaum's drawings and paintings: notes and games with typography but also, again and again, the use of other alphabets (Cyrillic, Hebrew), words that ultimately—deliberately?—make things unclear no matter whether we are dealing with a sketch, a scrap of paper, or indeed with a composition. And the words written into the images are often massively misspelled, but then again, there are some that, despite their unusual and phonetically counterintuitive spelling, are spelled correctly. It can be assumed that these are words that the dyslexic artist first saw written down rather than hearing them: He remembers them visually. The names of concentration camps and other places where the German murder of European Jews occurred appear on one sheet, and some of the not so famous ones are spelled correctly while others clearly derive from a deeper, privately phonetic familiarity and are spelled "incorrectly," based on hearing.

From today's perspective, it is surely puzzling that Stéphane Mandelbaum approached the malice and baseness of the German murder of Jews with artistic means similar to those he used for transgressions (also ethical ones) of a very different kind: radically lived-out sexuality, prostitution, criminal demimonde, slaughterhouses, Goebbels, and Pasolini all in one drawing style; Ernst Röhm and Brussels' nightlife, with the same fondness for the boorishly bizarre, for the glamorously misplaced. And these are the means that are also employed for the artists that Mandelbaum portrayed again and again: Pasolini, Rimbaud, Bacon—but then Goebbels, over and over, Goebbels and Ernst Röhm. Many homosexual motifs see in homosexuality above all a transgression, and then there are, the primarily grotesque, damaged faces from the demimonde and a milieu whose caricatural outward appearance also seems to vouch for a certain truthfulness.

The mindset from which Mandelbaum decided what interested him can perhaps best be explained based on another hero he clearly admired and often portrayed: the now rather forgotten author, journalist, and *Libération* writer Pierre Goldman. Goldman, who has been called one of the "three Jewish leaders of '68" (the others would have been André Glucksmann and Daniel Cohn-Bendit), was a radical leftist and anti-fascist activist who was not only game for armed struggle but also and above all for illegal acts in general. In the wake of which the police not only charged him with several robberies that he did not deny but also tried to pin a murder on him, for which he was condemned and imprisoned. That ruling turned out to have been politically motivated, however; Goldman's innocence was established on appeal. A paramilitary terrorist organization named Honneur de la police, consisting of supporters and members of the GAL (Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación), a secret police organization that practiced vigilante terrorism in the French and Spanish Basque Country against (real and alleged) members and supporters of ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna), murdered Goldman on a public street in 1979.

Goldman explicitly connected the struggle against bourgeois society and its state with his Jewish identity and appreciated the Jewish solidarity he was shown across political camps. He also connected his Jewish identity with a global anti-bourgeois and anti-racist struggle, said he had chosen to "live as a pariah," fought as a guerrilla fighter in South America, and wrote his impressive book *Dim Memories of a Polish Jew Born in France* in prison while listening to Cuban music on cassettes that Chris Marker had mixed for him.

Having grown out of the experience of European Jews, this international solidarity of all the opponents of a

repulsive Western status quo—which led to intense and existential encounters with other opponents and victims of capitalist bourgeois society and hence also to solidarity and communality with illegals and criminals—seems to have been especially important and formative for Mandelbaum, who nevertheless came from a later generation and was shaped by an artistic (both parents) Belgian with Jewish-Polish (and Armenian) background and influenced by the late 1970s. His gallery of "transgressive," tragic, and/or existentialist and/or heroic male artists—Pasolini, Bacon, Rimbaud, Mishima, Buñuel, Ōshima—points to the years in which the political reason for a radical opposition to bourgeois society that shrank from any taboo and tried out every drastic measure, withdrew after political disappointments and defeats of all kinds, to a fetish-like radicality and transgression for their own sakes. The names mentioned also roughly form the canon of an international, post-political, protopunk mood whose voices included Patti Smith around 1976 as well as the West Berlin Foucault fans at the Tunix meeting of 1978, the leftist French fans of the "heroic" criminal Jacques Mesrine, and the German readers of books published by Konkursbuch and the early Matthes & Seitz Verlag. That this cultural atmosphere by no means completely explains Mandelbaum is due, not solely but nevertheless essentially, to his position as a Jew, which he articulated less politically than his hero Goldman had.

Violence and obscenity negotiate in a strange connection of this post-radical-left civilization and its discontents in the culture of the second half of the 1970s. It is no longer a political violence that can be discussed in terms of arguments or even strategies, not violence against a much greater one, but merely a violence that floods all other nuances of political experience and that, in the political failure to even attempt to gain a seriously considered opportunity for action, wanders over to depicting and reifying it in art—which raises the problem of obscenity. The specific obscenity of (any?) depiction of the Shoah is an aspect of several works by Mandelbaum, but without revealing any way out, any clear alternative position such as the stance—advocated by Claude Lanzmann—of rejecting on principle any image of the Holocaust at all. Instead, in one Mandelbaum painting, an image of the entrance to a concentration camp, defiled with chaotically distributed spots of red, is hanging on the wall of a fictive room while the image is dominated by an erect red penis in the foreground (*Rêve d'Auschwitz*, 1983). Simultaneous despair over the possibility of depicting violence (especially: state terrorism) and immersion in that very problem was not solely Mandelbaum's concern at that time. Others among his heroes, such as Pasolini with *Salò, or The 120 Days of Sodom*, were also trying to advance by fighting forward.

In Mandelbaum's cause, however, one can scarcely speak of fighting, much less any planned direction it could take. Extreme violence is more a point of departure for someone who, at fifteen, portrayed himself as a bloody body hanging from a meat hook—with none of the self-pity of puberty but instead in a matter-of-fact and dry manner. Using Pasolini, he explored the tension between an existentially charged portrait of a familiar person and that of a face known only from the media: this disquiet generally turns into a recurring tension in his work between determination and fanaticism, not very far from several of the Goebbels portraits. The path from transgressor to fanatic, from fanatic to perpetrator, and perpetrator to mass murderer and then back to surprised determination, stuck halfway, and then ultimately to a poor bastard, takes the form of a zigzagging course. There is no opportunity to flee to the security of admiration, even though it is clear that it played a role in many of the portraits—but so did contempt.

In addition to the charged portrait that, despite the dependence of its arrangement on rectangular sheets, seems capable of leaping out of them at any time, there is another basic compositional attitude; the works in question are even titled *Composition*. One could say that it grew out of the occasional integration of portraits into the collages, out of working with original images disseminated by the media in connection with portraits, but really, it exists the whole time. I'm referring to something that I would call "visual lists." Teeming images but with, again and again, homogeneous elements: little piles, weapons, or sunglasses, lying side by side like the symbols from a game, like cards that can be played or tools for a computer game. But then faces over and over, drawn and sometimes pasted in, small portraits, and then miniaturized soldiers and tanks, as if preparing for strategic scenarios, war games, or Battleships.

All of this is overwhelmingly washed away and vaulted by the cascades of writing: carefully drawn Hebrew words, copied typography; scribbled lists of names and sums of money—all of it always strokes and hatching on the road from iconicity to the registering, enumerating symbol.

An uncanny tendency of symbols to mix themselves up and combine their logic and function under the dominance of an artist—this is reminiscent of another practice that moved to the center of visual culture during Mandelbaum's active years: graffiti. Mandelbaum's design principle is not so much the look of the writing that was then spreading internationally but rather the specific allover of its appearance in public. One can more easily imagine endless walls and subway windows functioning as the virtual frames of Mandelbaum's compositions, rather than the rectangular sheet or stretcher frame. Not only is there no depth, no receding, and one can always picture something being added, but above all, the juxtaposition of the formulaic, the formless scrawl of legible writing, and executed visual elements, are reminiscent of the real public surfaces on which graffiti come together, growing rampantly side by side in reference to one another (sometimes violently) or occupying space unconnectedly. This consorting of visualities happens without constraint and randomly, but it has structure, a structure one can recognize and apply, which Mandelbaum seems to do.

Friends and family have recognized in many of these collages of shopping lists, sums of money (owed, nabbed?), and autobiographical confessions, of favorite motifs, names of obsessions and obscenities, the same stories, sometimes made up, that Mandelbaum also told in other ways; they recognized the names of women the artist claimed to have slept with (or did?), plans for robberies in which he claimed to have participated (and that never happened). Increasingly, Mandelbaum seemed to be creating a world in which his existentialism, his attempt to get a handle on—I can only speculate about this—the history of violence that pursued him personally, that he experienced and/or inherited, would get an appropriate backdrop. The stories were presumably sensed from the demimonde of Brussels, which he did in fact frequent: small and medium thefts but also countless acts that he added to them that never actually occurred. That he was murdered by accomplices with whom he wanted to steal a Modigliani is of course a reason to bury his art forever beneath this in every respect monstrous and therefore attractive story. It would, however, also be inappropriate to separate from this biography an oeuvre whose artistic meaning is so much determined by autobiographical gestures (more so even than by direct references: traces of intensity as signs of entanglement and involvement). How does the desire for reality in the artistic work relate to the obviously increasing fictionalization of real life? How appropriate is it for posterity to make that relationship the focus of speculations?

These questions become especially relevant for any determination of this oeuvre's place in art history. Around 1980, the "scenes"—as they would be called today—of European metropoles were much further apart than they are now. When we find terms such as "Neo-Expressionism," "Art Brut," and even "Post-Expressionism" in the biographies of Mandelbaum now circulating, it seems strange. So-called Neo-Expressionism stood out for its room-filling grand gestures and motifs and above all for painting being its preferred medium, at least amongst its first generation that would perhaps include Georg Baselitz, A.R. Penck, and even Julian Schnabel—at most there is a very distant relationship to Penck. In the second generation, that of Kippenberger and the Oehlen brothers, it was already a reflexive Neo-Expressionism that itself no longer believed in expression and operated from an opposite pole to such existentialism. One can again at best see distant similarities, to Werner Büttner or even Walter Dahn. The simultaneity of spontaneous, random composition and a rather obsessive drawing style, of letting oneself go and knowing very precisely where one wants to go, tends rather to inscribe Mandelbaum into a line of eccentric outsiders who derive from their time only in terms of subject matter and experiences but who have not (yet) found a place artistically; remained *unfinished*—which here, for once, one can justly say without fear of the usual kitsch about artists.

Glossary

Anne Lemonnier

Francis Bacon

As a painter dedicated to figuration unlike many of his contemporaries, Francis Bacon (1909–1992) emphasized the representation of the human body, the expression of its obscure strength and fundamental solitude. Born in Dublin, in the Republic of Ireland, and at odds with his father during his youth, he left for London at the age of sixteen when his homosexuality came to light. During his travels to Berlin and Paris, where he led a bohemian lifestyle, he was deeply affected by Expressionist painting and Pablo Picasso's drawings. In the 1930s, he abandoned his first career as a decorator to devote himself exclusively to painting. His unique appropriation of the theme of crucifixion brought him recognition in 1945 after the scandal caused by his *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (1944), which represented constricted, disjointed forms with violent eloquence. In subsequent years, he would often choose subjects from past iconography: The portrait of Pope Innocent X by Diego Velásquez, Vincent van Gogh's self-portraits, and the screaming nurse from Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, in addition to images taken from newspapers. Bacon also painted self-portraits and portraits of his friends. The ways he deformed human faces and bodies to the point of disfigurement, isolated his subjects in barely suggested or even abstract spaces confront the viewer with the deepest intimacy of his characters and raw exposure to their tensions and impulses. The major triptychs of the 1970s that presented independent figures in juxtaposition further increased the sense of incommunicability of beings. The Grand Palais in Paris consecrated his work by organizing a major retrospective in 1971; George Dyer, his companion and model since 1963, committed suicide a short while before it opened. Exhibitions of Bacon's work followed throughout the world. Francis Bacon died of a heart attack in 1992 while on a trip to Madrid.

George Dyer

In 1963, George Dyer (1933–1971) met Francis Bacon in Soho, London. He was thirty-three and was remarkable in both his beauty and his criminal behavior (his burglaries earned him several spells in prison). Their stormy liaison would last

seven years. The painter made Dyer his partner in sado-masochistic explorations but also his favored model. Their relationship slowly fell apart as Dyer grew increasingly dependent on alcohol and suffered a decline in his mental health. He committed suicide on October 24, 1971, in the hotel room he was sharing with Bacon in Paris, shortly before the opening of the retrospective at the Grand Palais that would consecrate Bacon's career. Greatly affected by Dyer's death, Bacon produced three triptychs between 1972 and 1974 portraying the suicide of his friend as a sort of exorcism.

Joseph Goebbels
Joseph Goebbels (1897–1945) was an early member of the inner circle of National Socialist leaders in Germany. He was born into a modest, Catholic family in the Rhineland. After studies in German history and classical philology, he obtained his doctorate in 1921 and decided to serve the cause of National Socialism as editor of the *Völkische Freiheit* newspaper. In August 1926, he was named Gauleiter (district leader) of Berlin and Brandenburg, and in the Reichstag elections of May 1928, he was elected as a member of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). Hitler tapped him the following year to take over party propaganda. In January 1933, Hitler became Chancellor of the Reich, and, on March 11, Goebbels was rewarded with the position of Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. Exercising ruthless control over artistic creation and the work of the media, Goebbels held a speech during the public burning of books on May 10 of the same year. As a supporter of the increased repression of the Jews, he played a significant role in the so-called Kristallnacht on November 9, 1938. He organized film and radio propaganda during the Second World War and called for "Total War" in his infamous Sports Palace speech in 1943. A few hours after Hitler's suicide on May 1, 1945, Goebbels also killed himself. Having put their six children to sleep with morphine before poisoning them with cyanide, his wife, Magda, took her own life as well. In several propaganda campaigns, they had represented the ideal Aryan family for the German people.

Pierre Goldman
The son of the Jewish member of the French Résistance Alter Mojze Goldman, a fiery and rebellious character, Pierre Goldman (1944–1979) left high school and broke ties with his parents in the early 1960s, then tried to join South American revolutionaries in their fight. After a period of wandering, he enlisted with the Venezuelan guerrillas in June 1968 and remained there for one year. On his return to France—where he was wanted for desertion from the army—he engaged in a series of robberies. He was arrested for a double homicide committed during a pharmacy holdup on Boulevard Richard-Lenoir on December 19, 1969. After four and a half years on remand and following a highly politicized trial, he was sentenced to life imprisonment on December 14, 1974. October 1975 saw the publication of the *Dim Memories of a Polish Jew Born in France*, written by Goldman in Fresnes Prison. The following year, he was given a new trial and acquitted; he was released from prison on October 5, 1976. However, on September 20, 1979, he was gunned down on the street near his home. The clandestine group known as Honneur de la police (Honor of the Police) claimed responsibility for the assassination, but the actual identity of the perpetrator remains a mystery.

Claude Lanzmann
Born in Paris into a family from the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe, Claude Lanzmann (1925–2018) joined the Communist Youth during the war and was an organizer of Résistance efforts in Clermont-Ferrand. After studying philosophy, he became a journalist. In 1952, he had a decisive meeting with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir (with whom he had a seven-year relationship) and joined the editorial committee of the journal *Les Temps modernes*. After the release of his first film, *Israel, Why*, in 1973, Lanzmann dedicated twelve years to what would become the film *Shoah*, a dive into the history of the extermination camps in Poland: He identified the sites of genocide, found survivors, and collected the stories of executioners and victims. Lasting nine hours (from 350 hours of footage), the film was released in 1985. Described as "history in the present" by its director, *Shoah* contains no archival footage, no expert commentary, no voice-overs, and only presents a succession of firsthand accounts told facing the camera. Restoring the most tangible reality of events anchored in memory, Lanzmann builds a veritable cinematic monument.

Michel Leiris
In 1929, Michel Leiris (1901–1990) joined the editorial committee of *Documents*, a journal recently founded by Georges

Bataille. As a dissident member of the Surrealist group, he decided to dedicate his activity to literature. He then had a decisive encounter with ethnologist Marcel Griaule. In January 1931, Griaule recruited Leiris to serve as archival secretary for the Dakar–Djibouti ethnographic mission, which led to a two-year trip across Sub-Saharan Africa. In a logbook that sometimes reads more like a diary, Leiris recorded the work of researchers as well as his own impressions. His account was published in 1934 as *Phantom Africa*. Several commitments ensued from this first experience of Africa: Leiris was appointed to lead a department of the Ethnographic Museum of the Trocadéro in Paris (later the Musée de l'Homme) and wrote a thesis on the symbolism of the languages spoken by the Dogon people of Mali (*La Langue secrète des Dogons de Sanga*) in 1938. With Jacqueline Delange, he developed important work on artistic creation. This research led to the publication in 1967 of *African Art: The Arts of Mankind*.

Arié Mandelbaum
Father of Stéphane Mandelbaum. Born in Brussels in 1939 to Polish Jewish parents, Arié Mandelbaum decided to become a painter at the age of sixteen. As a student at the Brussels Académie des Beaux-Arts, he was known as the "New Soutine" among the group of Jewish painters with whom he exhibited at the beginning of his career. He met Germaine Mielzareghian (Pili), a young illustrator of Armenian origin, with whom he had three sons, Arieh, Stéphane, and Alexandre, before the couple separated. Appointed professor of the École d'Art in Uccle in 1966, he was named its director from 1979 to 2004. His son Stéphane became his assistant starting in 1984. Arié Mandelbaum's paintings, fed by references to Italian Renaissance masters, nonetheless confront contemporary political issues and retrace tragic episodes from twentieth-century history, in particular the Shoah. His work, his teaching, and his charismatic personality had a strong influence on all those around him, his students, and his son Stéphane, whose drawings converse—or compete—with those of his father.

Szulim Mandelbaum
Grandfather of Stéphane Mandelbaum (1905–1993). A Jewish immigrant originally from Pilica, Poland, he arrived in Belgium in 1924. He worked in the mines and steel-mill blast furnaces of Charleroi and obtained a resident visa. In the 1930s, he moved to Brussels with his wife, Ruchla Frenkiel, who gave birth to three children. In 1942, to escape the Gestapo's searches, he left for Seraing, near Liège, where he returned to mining. During the war, one of his brothers died soon after arriving in Auschwitz; another brother, who escaped deportation, was killed by Poles while trying to retake possession of his house. After the war, Szulim Mandelbaum engaged in a variety of short-term manual jobs. His grandson, Stéphane, grew close to him during that time; he made several portraits of Szulim, usually under the name Salomon. These ties were strengthened by Stéphane's desire to cultivate his Jewish heritage—as evidenced by his interest in Yiddish, traces of which are seen in several drawings.

Nagisa Ōshima
A Japanese director renowned for his commitment to political causes and provocative positions, Nagisa Ōshima (1932–2013) approached Anatole Dauman in 1974 to propose an erotic full-length film, hoping to escape Japanese censorship. Based on a real event from 1936, the film tells the story of a female servant, Abe Sada, who engaged in increasingly passionate sexual relations with her master Kichizō, up until she strangled him in the throes of orgasm and castrated him. Its release in 1976 caused a huge scandal, not only because of the point of view it adopted—that of a woman, and a dominant woman—but also because of the extreme refinement of the sexual imagery. Arguing for the artistic merits of the film, Dauman was able to procure its release without an X-rating. In Japan, however, when a book dedicated to the film was published, Ōshima was arrested for obscenity; he was acquitted in December 1979.

Pier Paolo Pasolini
Poet, novelist, scriptwriter, playwright, director, and actor, Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–1975) engaged in a fierce critique of the postwar Italian ruling class, excoriating the links between government, church, mafia, and the bourgeoisie in each of his works. His youth—during which he was a brilliant student and published his first poems—was marked by the death of his brother, who was murdered by Yugoslavian partisans. Pasolini became a teacher of literature and joined the Communist Party in 1947, but was cast out in 1949. Openly affirming his homosexuality, he published the novel *The Ragazzi* in 1955, for which he was charged with obscenity, and *A Violent Life*, in 1959, which described the harsh life of the slums. In parallel with his literary work,

he began to work in film. His films—that were sanctioned by dozens of trials—took part in the Neorealist movement at first: *Accattone, Mamma Roma*, and *La Ricotta*. In 1964, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, combining starkness and lyricism, raised questions about the sacred while continuing to portray the deprivations of humanity. Motivated by a radical rejection of mass culture, Pasolini then developed a more coded cinema: *Oedipus Rex*, *Pigsty*, *Theorem*, and *Medea*. In the 1970s, he composed his "Trilogy of Life": *The Decameron*, *The Canterbury Tales*, and *Arabian Nights* all under the banner of absolute freedom, including in terms of eroticism. On the night of November 1–2, 1975, Pasolini was brutally murdered on the beach in Ostia—an attack that was presumed then to be connected to his lifestyle, but which is now seen as having a political motive. A few weeks after his death, his final film appeared: *Salò, or The 120 Days of Sodom*, a transposition of the Marquis de Sade to the Mussolini era.

Pablo Picasso

For Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), the early 1930s were marked by the Surrealist adventure until the summer of 1936, when he took part in the Surrealist International Exhibition organized in London by Roland Penrose. The same year, however, war had broken out in Spain. In support of the Spanish Republican government, Picasso created a series of prints titled *The Dream and Lie of Franco*. On April 26, 1937, just as he was starting work on a commission for the Spanish Pavilion at the International Exhibition of Art and Technology in Modern Life in Paris, the Basque town of Guernica was heavily bombed by Nazi German and Italian Fascist forces supporting the Spanish Nationalist putschists under General Francisco Franco. Picasso decided to make it the subject of his composition. Monumental in format, painted in the style of a history painting, the canvas portrays a bull, the symbol of brute force, and a wounded mare, representing fallen Spain against a background of devastation; the faces of several tearful women rise from the darkness, one of them holding a dead child; in the foreground, the disjointed body of a dying man. This work, a forceful depiction of Picasso's pacifism and opposition to fascism, became emblematic of the barbarity of the twentieth century.

Arthur Rimbaud

A poet who described himself as a "seer" in search of a new language, Arthur Rimbaud (1854–1891) became a mythical figure in French poetry. He was raised in Charleville, in the Ardennes, under the sole authority of his strict mother after his father, an infantry officer, had deserted them. He proved to be both a brilliant and a rebellious student; his first attempts at poetry were encouraged by his teacher in rhetoric, Georges Izambard. Rimbaud abandoned his studies and decided to move to Paris in the midst of the Commune insurrection. Arriving in the capital in September 1871, he was welcomed into the avant-garde "Vilains Bonshommes"—a group from which he would quickly be excluded due to his provocative personality. In the company of the poet Paul Verlaine, with whom he was having an affair, he traveled to England and Belgium. These wanderings were at the origin of his book *Illuminations*. However, tensions grew between the two poets; on July 10, 1873, Verlaine wounded Rimbaud with two shots from a pistol. While recovering, Rimbaud composed the poem "A Season in Hell." After another trip to London, he went to Stuttgart where he saw Verlaine, who had just been released from prison, and entrusted him with the manuscript for *Illuminations*. After that time, Rimbaud abandoned poetry; his life was then punctuated by travel, wandering, and returns to Charleville. In 1876, he enlisted with mercenaries fighting in the Dutch East Indies; he deserted soon after arriving in Java. He traveled to Bremen, Stockholm, and Copenhagen, then to Alexandria, Milan, and Cyprus. He spent the next decade between Yemen and Abyssinia, Aden and Harar, as an employee of a trader in animal hides and coffee. From 1885 to 1888, he engaged in arms trafficking for the king of Shewa; the enterprise ended in failure. Suffering from pain in the right leg in early 1891 that developed into a cancerous tumor, he returned to France; his leg was amputated at the Hôpital de la Conception in Marseille on May 25. Over the following months his condition worsened. He died on November 10 at thirty-seven years old.

Ernst Röhm

Ernst Röhm (1887–1934) was a German officer, politician, and leader of the paramilitary militia known as the Sturmabteilung (SA) under the Third Reich. Enlisted in the German military since adolescence, he was wounded several times during the First World War. As a member of the

general staff of the Reichswehr (the army of the Weimar Republic) he met Adolf Hitler, who invited him to join the German Workers' Party that later became, under their influence, the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). In November 1923, Röhm, at the head of a nationalist league, participated in a putsch attempt in Munich. He was sentenced to five months in prison. From 1928 to 1930 he was on a military mission in Bolivia.

In 1930, Hitler recalled him to lead the SA. Röhm thus took charge of the Brownshirts, which became a powerful militia using brutal violence that contributed greatly to the conquest of power. Always pushing Hitler to act with more force, Röhm promoted the project of a grand National Socialist revolution. To control his thirst for power, Hitler—who took power in January 1933—appointed him to the Council of Ministers. The two then became rivals over the Reichswehr, which Röhm wanted to fuse with the SA, while Hitler wanted Röhm's support to brutally eliminate political opponents in the first months of National Socialist rule. At the same time, Heinrich Himmler, Reinhard Heydrich, and Hermann Göring spread the rumor to Hitler that Röhm was developing a plot to eliminate him. Hitler was forced to act and planned a purge of the SA. On June 30, 1934, Röhm, therefore, was imprisoned during the "Night of the Long Knives." On July 1, having refused the opportunity Hitler offered him to take his own life, Röhm was executed by two SS officers. His last words were, "Mein Führer, mein Führer!" Hitler used Röhm's homosexuality to justify his execution.

Stéphane Mandelbaum

1961
Stéphane Mandelbaum is born on March 8 in Brussels. His father, Arié Mandelbaum, is an artist and his mother, Germaine (Pili) Mandelbaum, an illustrator. Mandelbaum has two brothers: Arieh, his elder, and Alexandre, his younger. His paternal grandfather, Szulim Mandelbaum, fled Poland in the early 1920s.

1972–1976
Spends four years in an alternative school, the Snark near Charleroi.

1976–1979
Studies at the Académie des Beaux-Arts de Watermael-Boitsfort in Brussels. Attends evening figure drawing classes with Lucien Braet and meets Alain Thorez and Pierre Thoma with whom he regularly visits the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium. The artists also visit the slaughterhouses of Brussels.

1978
Divides his life between his divorced parents who live in semidetached houses in Watermael-Boitsfort. Travels to Italy and visits with assiduity the museums and historical sites of Venice, Florence, Pietrasanta, and Ostia. Travels to Paris with the Academy in Watermael-Boitsfort.

1979
On this occasion, Mandelbaum sees, with Thoma, the film *Apocalypse Now* by Francis Ford Coppola. Following a quarrel with Lucien Braet, Mandelbaum leaves the Art Academy at Watermael-Boitsfort and joins the school École d'Art in Uccle (Brussels), where his father is the director. Mandelbaum regularly assists his father during his classes. Learns engraving in the workshop, and makes twenty-two dry point plates between 1979 and 1981. Undergoes physical transformation through intensive boxing and circuit training. Learns Yiddish.

1980
Mandelbaum wins the *Trait-Couleur-Volume* arts competition of the Crédit Communal de Belgique.

1981
Participation in the exhibitions *Neuf peintres juifs* (Cercle Ben Gourion, Brussels) and *Uccle–Veurne* (Galerie Hugo Godderis, Veurne).

1982
Participates in the exhibition *Nouveau mouvement réaliste* at the Galerie Rencontres in Brussels. In May, Mandelbaum exhibits drawings at the bookshop L'Île lettrée in Virton; the catalogue is prefaced by Marcel Moreau.

1983
Mandelbaum sees *In the Realm of the Senses*, a Franco-Japanese film directed by Nagisa Ōshima in 1976. He is very marked by the death of the artist Joseph Henrion, father of his childhood friend Véronique. Exhibits at the Arlon prison with his father Arié Mandelbaum.

1984
Marries Claudia Bisiono-Nagliema, and adopts her daughter, Nadine. He teaches Nadine Yiddish through drawing. Inspired by existing translations, Mandelbaum translates and illustrates poems by Peretz Markish, a Russian Jewish poet from the first half of the century, victim of the Stalinist pogroms, for the *Revue & Corrigée* magazine.

1985
Exhibition of drawings at the Galerie Hugo Godderis in Veurne. An exhibition of drawings at the Galerie Christine Colmant is organized in Brussels in December.

1986
In April and May, Mandelbaum travels to Congo, to his wife's native village. Participates in at least two burglaries: on August 29, the theft of Netsuke statuettes from the home of a European civil servant in Auderghem; on October 12, the theft of a painting by Amedeo Modigliani from the home of a woman in Ixelles. Mandelbaum disappears on December 1. His father receives a telex from Larnaca (Cyprus) stating that his son is imprisoned in Beirut. In reality, Mandelbaum seems to have been murdered on the instructions of the person who ordered the theft of the Modigliani painting, shortly after his disappearance.

1987
The body of Mandelbaum is discovered by children in January, in a rocky cavity not far from Namur. The autopsy revealed that he had been executed by a violent blow to the skull, then shot, his face burned with acid.

Imprint

This booklet is published in conjunction with the exhibition

Stéphane Mandelbaum

TOWER[MMK]
14 April–30 October 2022

OPENING HOURS
Tue–Sun: 11 am–6 pm
Wed: 11 am–7 pm

CURATOR OF THE EXHIBITION
Susanne Pfeffer

PUBLISHER
Susanne Pfeffer

MANAGING EDITOR
Lukas Eide Flygare

PHOTO EDITOR
Leonore Schubert

TEXTS
Diedrich Diederichsen, Anne Lemonnier, Susanne Pfeffer

COPY-EDITING
Amanda Gomez, Kirsten Thietz

PROOFREADING
Amanda Gomez, Kirsten Thietz, Tina Wessel

TRANSLATIONS
Ames Hodges (Anne Lemonnier); Steven Lindberg (Diedrich Diederichsen); Judith Rosenthal (Susanne Pfeffer)

GRAPHIC DESIGN
Zak Group, London
turbo type, Offenbach

PRINT
Kuthal Print, Mainaschaff

COVER
Stéphane Mandelbaum, *P. de Max*, 1984, MUSEUM[MMK]FÜR MODERNE KUNST, Acquired with generous support from the partners of the MMK

INSIDE FRONT COVER
Stéphane Mandelbaum, *Composition (Masques Nô)*, 1983, Eric Decelle, Brussels

IMAGE PAGES
Stéphane Mandelbaum, *Mama Pauline*, 1984, Collection of Simone and Arthur Benzaquen, Paris

Stéphane Mandelbaum, *Bacon et frise*, 1982, Collection of Paula Hauser, Brussels

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TOWER[MMK] was made possible by:

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