

COPYISTS

IN AN EXCEPTIONAL COLLABORATION
WITH THE MUSÉE DU LOUVRE



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14.06.2025 → 02.02.2026

Curators: Donatien Grau, advisor for contemporary programs at the Musée du Louvre, and Chiara Parisi, director of the Centre Pompidou-Metz

Copyists is a creative exhibition – as much an X-ray of contemporary art as an exhibition for art history enthusiasts. All works on view were conceived, prepared and assembled to be shown at the Centre Pompidou-Metz. For over a year, one hundred artists who are not copyists at first glance, examined their relationship with works in the Louvre. They browsed galleries, databases and publications, drawing on memory to recall the moment that provoked an awakening in them, revealing a miraculous encounter. They then conceived their work.

Strolling through Gallery 3 at Centre Pompidou-Metz, each visitor can experience an unexpected encounter with these new, and at the same time, reflective, works that exist on both sides of time. Everything is new, as the works on display were prompted by the occasion; everything is reflexive, because each work is squared – a work made from a work, a work about a work.

This exhibition brings together exclusively, works produced by living, international artists of different generations, whose practices draw from diverse visual arts fields, thus intersecting practices. The crystallization of a feeling for the contemporary is like foam. Everything comes from afar : from the artists' own memories and from works experienced sometimes decades ago - the colors, the lines and the forms that remained anchored in their memory.

The participating artists have become copyists, inscribing themselves in this long history of reworking and moving forward, always connected. The commissioned works have no limits: drawing, painting, sculpture, clothing, design, engraving, virtual reality, film – mediums are not exclusive because copying is not restricted to a material or a form. Copying doesn't mean simply *copying*, but get setting to the heart of the matter. It is an act of learning that recognizes we are not alone, that we don't create from our own interior world projected onto matter, that creating is the expression of an individual and also a collective gesture.

LIST OF ARTISTS

Rita Ackermann, Valerio Adami, Georges Adéagbo, agnès b., Henni Alftan, Ghada Amer, Giulia Andreani, Lucas Arruda, Kader Attia, Brigitte Aubignac, Tauba Auerbach, Mathias Augustyniak, Rosa Barba, Miquel Barceló, Julien Bismuth, Michaël Borremans, Mohamed Bourouissa, Glenn Brown, Humberto Campana, Théo Casciani, Guglielmo Castelli, Ymane Chabi-Gara, Xinyi Cheng, Nina Childress, Gaëlle Choisne, Jean Claracq, Francesco Clemente, Robert Combas, Julien Creuzet, Enzo Cucchi, Neïla Czermak Icti, Jean-Philippe Delhomme, Hélène Delprat, Damien Deroubaix, Mimosa Echard, Nicole Eisenman, Tim Eitel, Bracha L. Ettinger, Simone Fattal, Sidival Fila, Claire Fontaine, Cyprien Gaillard, Antony Gormley, Laurent Grasso, Dhewadi Hadjab, Camille Henrot, Nathanaëlle Herbelin, Thomas Hirschhorn, Carsten Höller, Iman Issa, Koo Jeong A, Y.Z. Kami, Jutta Koether, Jeff Koons, Bertrand Lavier, Lee Mingwei, Thomas Lévy-Lasne, Glenn Ligon, Nate Lowman, Victor Man, Takesada Matsutani, Paul McCarthy, Julie Mehretu, Paul Mignard, Jill Mulleady, Josèfa Ntjam, Laura Owens, Christodoulos Panayiotou, Ariana Papademetropoulos, Philippe Parreno, Nicolas Party, Nathalie Du Pasquier, Bruno Perramant, Elizabeth Peyton, Martial Raysse, Andy Robert, Madeleine Roger-Lacan, George Rouy, Christine Safa, Anri Sala, Edgar Sarin, Ryōko Sekiguchi, Luigi Serafini, Elené Shatberashvili, Apolonia Sokol, Christiana Soulou, Claire Tabouret, Pol Taburet, Djamel Tatah, Agnès Thurnauer, Georges Tony Stoll, Fabienne Verdier, Francesco Vezzoli, Oriol Vilanova, Danh Võ, Anna Weyant, Chloe Wise, Yohji Yamamoto, Yan Pei-Ming



With the special participation of Gérard Manset
Song composed for the exhibition

COPIER/ TRANSCRIBER

At school, a copier is someone who looks over their neighbor's shoulder to find the correct answer that they doesn't have themselves. In art, a copyist is an artist who, during their apprenticeship, recreates the work of another. They attempt to imitate the master's gestures in order to achieve their own mastery. The copyist (or transcriber), seems to suffer from the copier's bad reputation: wouldn't the student, like the artist, be better off seeking their own originality and exploiting what makes him or her unique rather than trying to copy what others have done? One of the major misunderstandings of copyists derives from the juxtaposition of these two terms: a construction of the ideal of originality. The idea that copying automatically means being a bad pupil, instead of recognizing that it can, on the contrary, be a learning process. Within the act of copying – as in the work of the copyist – is the recognition that we don't know everything, that we must assume the relationship in order to know and therefore to act. Being a copyist means starting from another in order to exist oneself, in order to pose and position oneself. It is also an act of learning, unlike that of the copier leaning over the shoulder and transcribing everything that's read without even necessarily understanding it. To copy, in art, one has to follow the gestures of their predecessors. One must read the line and trace it anew in a way that respects what was. In this way, we understand the motif we've set ourselves, and through our understanding, we can make it our own, or even reinvent or contradict it within our personal understanding. The copier doesn't care what they copy – the question is of little importance, whereas the copyist studies, patiently – working against the current of accelerating images and their technological means of production.

AURA/TECHNIQUE

One modern line of thought considers our relationship to a work of art through its manifestation of an aura, which is both that of the work and, often, that of its author. The latter gives his or her work such a charge of radical singularity, that it guides the viewer's feelings through its presence. An aura, by definition, is unique, and cannot be shared. Technique, on the other hand, is not individual: a work illustrates a technique, while an aura emanates from it. A technique can be perfected whereas an aura is self-evident. An aura is produced through art and the artist, but technique is a product of the craftsman. In principle, a copy of a work of art does not transpose the aura of the original, but it testifies to an attempt to get close to it, and we know that such an attempt is by nature doomed to failure. To copy a work of art is a technical exercise with the impossible dream of simultaneously reconjuring its aura, while the technical reproducibility cited by Walter Benjamin at the beginning of the twentieth century, dealt the aura its fatal blow. Any form of representation (or even duplication of reality) runs the risk of retaining nothing of the density of a work of art, and behind this observation lies the modern problem of intentionality. The tension evident between aura and technique raises the question of the gap between a work of art and other objects, the role of technology in copying a work as well as the role of the artist: what happens when a technological copy is made by the artist, and not only from the perspective of pure recreation of reality? Is the technologically recreated work also endowed with an aura? Consequently, the trembling of the hand appears as a guarantee of humanity, or even the last remnant of a trace of the sacred.



The responses to this *carte blanche* were diverse: some artists selected works from the museum's storage, others chose monumental pieces or even works that have disappeared or are immaterial. Each label specifies the nature, title, and origin of the copied work.

Have a question or feel like having a conversation?

Our cultural mediators are here for you.

WORK/COPY

A work of art is autonomous and carries within it a metaphysical charge: it challenges conventions and opens up new ways of living. It is the result of work that is justified because it continues the story. But we don't know whether a copy has the status of a fully-fledged work. Its dependence on a pre-existing work makes it a relative reality, a contradiction to the modern myth of the original artist: an artist makes a work, not a copy. Behind this seemingly playful phrase sits a presupposition of modern civilization – that copying is always a form of following – while the work is always autonomous. Yet a work always exists in relation to others, and the copy – through its intimate relationship to a model – allows us to point out the traits that define so many works of art, such as conversation with others; the desire to achieve technical mastery; understanding the preceding work of art as a fragment of the world, and a space where we grasp that creation is an attempt at knowledge. Acknowledging that a copy can be a work of art in itself means assuming that the designation of the author's presence can be extremely small

STORY/FORM

Apparently copying means duplicating a form as perfectly as possible. To copy a face, a landscape or an object, means to make two out of the reality of one, and from there, on to several and the multiple. As a consequence, copying would be a path to abstraction through a passion for form, where object and thing are a pure presence, without any aspirations of narration. It would be a purely formal gesture that transcribes a visual reality into the same language. But it is also a game of recognizing a reality that has been, and is again, in a tension between the unknown and the familiar. If copying is to displace

and does not have to assume monumentality or the distinction of a signature. The genre of the copy can truly be an art form, evident by appropriation present in the art of the last hundred years that has proven as much. What if a copy were a portrait of a work in the same way that there are portraits of people? You can't deny a portrait the status of a work of art just because it is based on an existing person. A copy can be a work of art, and a work of art can include elements of quotation or copying, which is sometimes called a tribute.

the architecture of the visible, the approach may seem limited. The visible is not just an architecture – it is also a narrative, teeming with stories. The field of copying is thus at stake, whether comprising the visual arts purely in their traditional conception – painting, drawing and sculpture – or life forms and even literature. In effect, not copying an image, but the narrative underlying that image. What we're talking about here then is not just visible form, but construction of meaning. The question then arises of the insertion of diversions and transformations into the copy, to make a construction of meaning emerge from this architecture of the visible, which appropriates and develop it differently, bringing forth the strangest from the familiar and thus constituting its internal contradiction. The path of evolution, starting from the copy itself, is therefore concurrently that of narrative and form: form, because it is a universe of learning from the works created, and narrative, because that is what underpins all action.

HERITAGE/ CREATION

They are still often contrasted. Heritage is said to be about preserving the past, while creation is about giving free rein to inspiration. Both approaches are fantasies or ideologies. The tangible, sensitive reality of those who indulge in them is far more complex, and these two notions are linked through intense conversations. The creative process is intertwined with a thousand different movements, internal protests, attempts to overcome and repeated gestures: you don't just appear in front of a canvas without any inner landscape. To give birth to the new, we return to images we've seen, experienced and thought about. Heritage is not just about collecting works from the past, as in a canon – it is a collection of sites that require care and attention – and above all, that only come to life when they are revealed. Heritage only truly exists when it is seen and appreciated, and when it inspires lives. In other words, heritage is only manifest when it is created – in the lives and eyes of each and every one of us. So once again, between heritage and creation, it is the quarrel between the individual and the collective, with all their ideological presuppositions: heritage is collective; creation is individual. However today, it could be argued that creation only exists when it touches on the collective, and heritage is revealed only when experienced through individuality. To copy is to highlight the obsolescence of this opposition: it exists fully in one's own gesture, and also together with others.

VISITORS INFORMATION

OPENING HOURS

Every day, except Tuesdays and 1st May

SCHEDULE

1st november to 31 march

Monday → Sunday: 10-18:00

1st april to 31 october

Monday → Thursday: 10-18:00

Friday → Sunday: 10-19:00

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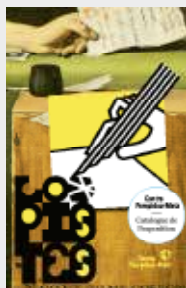
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Centre Pompidou-Metz

1, parvis des Droits-de-l'Homme

F-57020 Metz | +33 (0)3 87 15 39 39

contact@centrepompidou-metz.fr



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