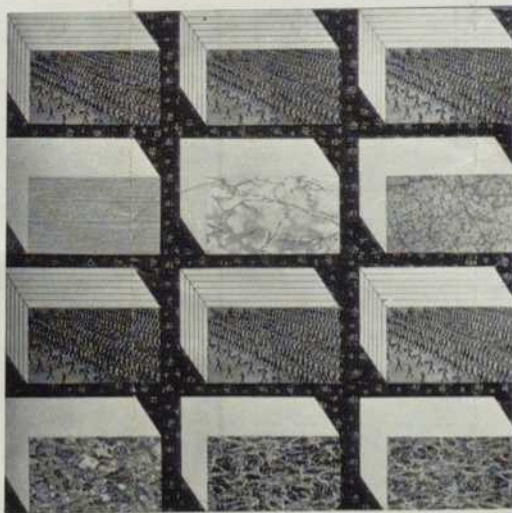
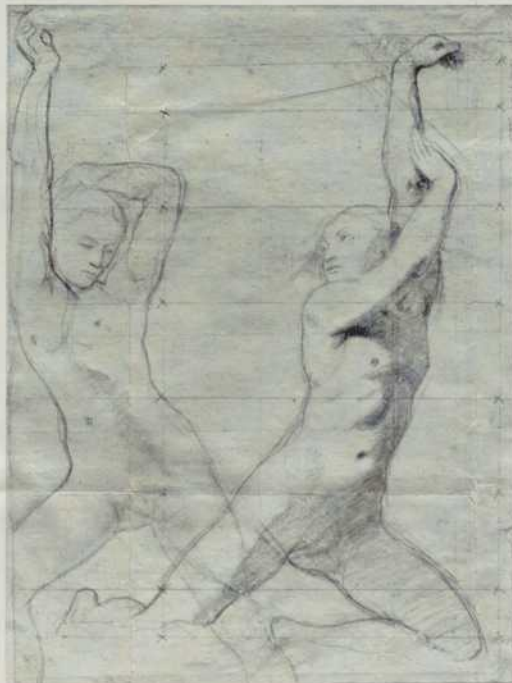


Facing page, top **Seurat**  
*Les Clochetons* 1881/83  
 9½ × 13 in.  
 Galerie Claude Bernard

Facing page, bottom **Antonie Tapies**  
*Nu* 1966, painting  
 51 × 56 in.  
 Galerie Maeght

Below **Ingres**  
*Study for the Oath of Louis XIII*

Bottom **Sarkis**  
*Exposition No. 10* 1967  
 Photos and plastic adhesives on canvas  
 77 × 77 in.



*Bain Turc*, which were intended as pragmatic, personal notations, ended up closer to Renaissance architecture than any concoction set to that goal.

In all the paintings, there is the element of stasis in which Ingres, longing after Raphael, promised to become a French Vermeer, and did

not. Then there was the element of present imperfect, Stendahl as opposed to Raphael, the structural presence and the intimate revelation. And it was the second set of impulses that earned Ingres his place beyond fashion. Like Manet and Flaubert, he was a great delineator and a *réaliste malgré tout*.

The moral, pointing to the hazards of virtue and the pitfalls of concensus, might well produce a healthy insecurity in contemporary circles, but probably will not. The FIFTH PARIS BIENNALE proved, again, the seductive power of whatever Salon happens to reign at any given time. The victims—and precious few were not—were all of ages 20 to 35. Ideas and invention were presumed to be the looked-for criteria, with no prejudice against hysterical pregnancies as opposed to the other kind. In fact, Romanticism always harbours the idea that a hysterical pregnancy is potentially infinite in its possibilities, whereas the other kind is hackneyed. And when it comes to Romanticism, the Salons of 1967 and 1867 may be in closer proximity than anyone likes to think.

Whereas the beauty of the Antonie Tapies show at GALERIE MAEGHT is the sublimation of the idea in a tangible and hermetic bloom that defies justification and explications. These are works of the past two years, out of Spain and hence out of a kind of voluntary exile. Whereas a century ago, anything that happened in art tended to happen at nerve centres of intense communication, the pressure of mass media may now have set the reverse law into effect. Cunning is no problem but silence and exile are at a premium.

In Tapies' work, silence abounds. One thinks of the silence behind the wail of the flamenco *cantor* in which the endless flexibility of the human voice is tethered to the rigorous uses of incantation. To evoke the inexpressible is the purpose of ritual and the repetition of ritual. In Tapies, the surface increments and expatiates and, like the inflections of the *cantor*, seems simply to abide.

Of late, Tapies has also tried moving into a higher key, off on more febrile tangents in which the surface thins and the incidental symbol suddenly flings itself into one corner, grinning impudently as the Cheshire Cat, and fading just as surely. These may be liberties taken but they are also confirmations sought after. The language remains strict and the more extreme variations are actually attempts at defining out limits rather than at pretending that outer limits do not exist.

At GALERIE BLUMENTHAL-MOMMATON, Sarkis (who is Turkish and works in Paris) looks for contours in the diametrically opposite fashion. You can hardly call Sarkis a painter because he hardly paints. The medium is photographic, but Sarkis did not take the photographs either, *Paris-Match* seems to have taken most of them. Still, Sarkis is a visualist whose materials are international and mechanically wrought but whose statement is convincingly eastern.

What he has done is to fragment, retract and reconstruct photographic passages into fugues that recall the original message yet disassociate the original sequence. The procedure is technically akin to, but effectively far removed from Warhol's multiple repetitions of photographic documents.

Warhol's are essentially Dada and primarily literary. These are poetic variations on a theme, or rather themes constructed on a body of skilled variations. A volcano in eruption erupts not once but successive times, and yet, by dint of repetition, not at all; the lava spout becomes a rhythmic delineation. A city facade is squared, cubed, disintegrated and reformulated to evoke its formal, stark, byzantine interior. The image is jarred out of one focus into another. In a less typical performance Sarkis holds the refractions to a minimum and puns a fugue of marching men with facades of marble, and then the tide of marble with a backdrop of roses redundant, *à la Gertrude Stein*.

The photography, which was a refined product in its previous, *Paris-Match* incarnation, now becomes raw material. Nor is the raw material imposed upon coyly or fashionably. It is simply anatomized, but skilfully so, and it becomes a valid medium of perception and definition.

Can one ask for more? You can refine a shape drastically and produce perceptual confusion, and you can also diffuse a shape and produce the longed-for clarity. As in the Seurat drawings of GALERIE CLAUDE BERNARD's Seurat to César anthology of drawing and sculpture. This is an informal show, but a major little show, in the sense that it can well be used as a point of reference. Sensibility is its uncommon denominator, and a crystal clear focus is its result. As for the Seurats, the misted architecture is so internally complete and so advanced that it discounts the inherent value of any one stylistic breakthrough, then or now. The cogency is there in the flesh or nowhere at all.

And so to John Wragg's sculpture at GALERIE ALEXANDRE IOLAS. Wragg began with the finely sheared form and it is logical rather than coincidental that the vocabulary of Cool Art sculpture became meaningful to him. The earlier totems seem to have come frankly and cogently out of Brancusi, and then the cool forms depart from the totemic presence, grow denser and terser and muter. Given present enthusiasms, he might have been led to stop there, but did not. The latest works revert instead to shapes that are more metaphorical and again more totemic. So that Wragg's progress is motivated by internal necessity rather than attuned to stylistic conclusions. The seed lives and the life force stirs. This time it's real. □