

**J-P RITSCH-FISCH**  
GALERIE

**Press kit from  
The Memento Vivere exhibition**

at the JP Ritsch-Fisch Gallery, Strasbourg



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# Memento Vivere

Herve Bohnert

## Press release

**For more than 25 years, the JP Ritsch-Fisch gallery** draws for each of its exhibitions from the vast field of art brut, the contours of which were traced by Jean Dubuffet: "works executed by people unscathed by artistic culture, [...] so that their authors derive everything (subjects, choice of materials used, means of transposition, rhythms, ways of writing, etc.) from their own background and not from the clichés of classical art or fashionable art in order to offer everyone to benefit from its resources and its diversity".

Dubuffet chose Art Brut to provoke, jostle or even disturb, but also to question the very notion of a work of art: does an artist necessarily have to have undergone training or come from an academic and artistic background to produce works of art?

Faithful to this idea in its revolutionary and subversive time, the Ritsch-Fisch gallery considers that it is not in a school that one becomes an artist, and that the creative genius manifests itself from the deepest and most unconscious strata. of our existence. In this, Art Brut is universal and this is undoubtedly the reason why it touches us so much.

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From February 17, 2023 to April 14,  
2023 Galerie JP Ritsch-Fisch

***Hervé Bohnert pushes our gaze on death and, even more, on life, to the extreme.***

With him, if the flesh is tormented, it is also happy. This extraordinary artist who pushes the boundaries of art brut a little further, is part of the somewhat forgotten tradition of the famous memento mori and funerary arts so popular in past centuries.

Thanks to his research to find THE piece that speaks to him, Hervé Bohnert always chooses objects that have a story. Old photos forgotten in an antique drawer or at the bottom of a second-hand dealer's shelf. Sculptures, furniture or even caryatids that he emaciates to reveal the skeleton, delicately sculpted by this autodidact, with astounding skill and anatomical knowledge.

But, make no mistake about it: these partly emaciated characters, covered in blood or paint which should frighten us, retain, even reveal their grace and sound, brought back to life by the gesture of the artist. This is one of the paradoxes that Hervé Bohnert, not without malice, invites us to reflect on with his work.

Without his intervention, he tells us, the statues, photos, objects and bodies he manhandles would remain lifeless, destined for a long purgatory, because over time they have become worthless. In this, the work of Hervé Bohnert is not a mediation of death, but an invitation to life: a memento vivere.

The new exhibition of the Ritsch-Fisch gallery takes us discovering the world captivating by Hervé Bohnert, through the presentation of sculptures, drawings and scraped photos whose plastic, symbolic and poetic force are now recognized by institutions and present in major international collections.

**Opening on Friday February 17, 2023 from 6:30 p.m.  
in the presence of Hervé Bohnert.**



## Herve Bohnert

"Originally and living in Strasbourg, Hervé Bohnert is an artist who deals with the many faces of death, those that come to us from history - from art and culture, those from the immediate environment and from a real contemporaneity which puts death in representation, but also rituals in the uses of other cultures. The work questions as much the conditions of the excoriation of death as the philosophical and plastic dimension of the artist. »

Germain Roesz.



H. Bohnert, untitled, 2020  
Carved wooden cabinet, 270x150x50cm  
Currently on display at the Würth Museum in Erstein (FR)

## Main Exhibitions:

10-2022 / 05-2023, Würth Erstein Museum

2022 - Art Paris, Grand Palais ephemeral Outsider Art Fair, Paris (FR)

2018 - Nightmares of the past, Alsatian museum, Strasbourg (FR)

2018 - Auberive Abbey, Contemporary Art Center, Auberive (FR)

2018 - Twilight is grandiose, Old tobacco factory, Strasbourg (FR)

2017 - Nightmares of the Past, Alsatian Museum, Strasbourg (FR)

2017 - Der tanzende Tod und andere Turbulenzen, Fisher Kunsthandel & Edition, Berlin (DE)

2017 - Hey! Arts factory gallery, Gallery show#1, Paris (FR)

2016 - Time passes, memories remain, The route of icons, Church of Graufthal (FR)

2015 - Hey Act III, Halle Saint-Pierre, Paris (FR)

2014 - ST Gertrude Gallery, Hamburg (DE)  
*The wall*, Maison Rouge – Antoine de Galbert Foundation, Paris (FR)

2013 - Hey Act II, Halle Saint-Pierre, Paris (FR)

2012 - Sexi Blatt, Gugging Gallery, Maria Gugging, Austria (AT)

2009 - Doing with, Le Maillon, Strasbourg Theater (FR)



Watercolor by Hervé Bohnert reproduced on the first page of the book: *Le beau, l'art brut et le Marchand*  
Edition The Contemporary Workshop

# Chat Whit Hervé Bohnert

*Two works by Hervé Bohnert, produced during the COVID crisis, are currently visible until May 2023 at the Würth Foundation museum (FR), as part of the exhibition Art Brut - a unique dialogue with the Würth collection:*

We had the Covid, that is to say an epidemic...

For me, it was a question of doing something that marks what we experienced, during the first confinement. In all the scenes that appear on the piece of furniture that I worked on, death is always triumphant, the living bows. These subjects have fascinated me for a very long time, it is my guideline, the *memento mori* in particular. I feed on it for my work. Before the war, photographs of the dead were sent to families and loved ones, death was part of everyday life. For example, I like to work on old photos because at that time, what was a life like? Ten photographs before death: birth, group school, marriage, grandparents and perhaps the one on his deathbed.

I need to start from objects that have had an experience, I like to say that I bring back to life objects that we have somewhat forgotten, sculptures or photos that were in large numbers in flea markets and no one was watching.

I want to challenge, create a reaction but at the same time, under the flesh, there is a skeleton, it's beautiful, there's nothing to be afraid of, for me it's about taking another look at the body, on death, on the end of us all. For example, I worked with blood, it shouldn't be off-putting because blood is life! But if I find that society has become very slick, very puritanical and that I think it's the role of artists to provoke, I'm not a fan of "gore" either and I have great respect for the objects that I'm working. I also like it when you don't immediately see that there has been work done on the piece.

"I need to start from objects that have had an experience, I like to say that I bring life back to objects that we have somewhat forgotten..."

For example, I worked on a Christ that I turned into a skeleton, some people didn't even notice that it wasn't an original piece, they couldn't tell right away if anything had been changed.

For an exhibition I worked placemats in the same way as women did at the time at home. They spent hours and hours embroidering them. I took these old doilies and only worked the shape with the traditional method of starch to make skulls, in fact I gave new life to these objects. I also like plywood structures, everyday objects or wooden crates that we often throw away, for example. When people look, there is something reassuring, because it's familiar objects that I hijack, that's what interests me.

I choose my pieces by heart, what is important is that there has been an experience. There are some that I will rework very quickly, others stay a year, two years, in the studio before I start to work on them and do something with them because sometimes, I do something thing that was inside of me... You have the answers later, it's obvious afterwards, not while you're working on it.

I use techniques depending on the problem posed by the piece, when I confront the problem, with old or contemporary tools. I think it's the opposite of what you learn in school: I decide the technique according to the problem, not according to what I want to do at the start, I forged myself. Sometimes I achieve my goals by chance, by trying, by finding the way I'm most comfortable with, you have to be curious. When a work is too perfect, it bothers me, I prefer to work with chance, imperfection.

What is needed is for the pieces to speak for themselves, when there is no need for explanations. The explanations direct the gaze, by not talking about it too much, it leaves everyone free to find their own story. That's what I think of art in general: I prefer works for which you don't need to give an explanation, to read a text to understand, where the relationship with the piece is strong enough to create something intimate.

In life, I do another job, my job, I love it and it allows me to be free in my art. I say "my art" because I don't like to say my work when I talk about my creations. Art gives me something very personal if it was a real job I would stop. And then, if there are people who like what I do, that motivates me to continue.

# The JP Ritsch-Fisch gallery, more than 25 years of passion raw art and international recognition

*The JP Ritsch-Fisch gallery has been devoted since its origin to the most important authors of historical art brut and today celebrates its more than 25 years of existence.*

*Since 1999, it has participated in major international fairs and strives to present historical masterpieces of art brut.*

*The JP Ritsch-Fisch gallery advises many French and foreign collectors and works with major institutions.*

*In 2021, many authors and contemporary artists represented by the gallery entered the collection of the National Museum of Modern Art of the city of Paris (Centre Pompidou). In 2022, the gallery participated in the choice of works currently exhibited at the Museum Wurth at Erstein (FR) and lent many pieces from his fund for the event.*



The gallery is open:

**Tuesday to Friday, 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.**

**Saturday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.**

**She will have a stand at Art Paris,  
from March 30 to April 2, 2023:**

 **Booth A3**

## Press visuals

# Exposure *Memento Vivere*

From February 17 to April 14, 2023 at the Galerie JP Ritsch-Fisch



*Untitled*, 2017  
*18th century reliquary angel*  
carved wood  
176x28x15cm



*The lovers departed*, 2022  
Wood carving and patina  
100x50x40cm



*Series of communicants*, 2017  
Watercolor and ink on paper  
100x70cm



*Untitled*, 2003  
Old photo scratched and drawn  
42x32cm

# Press visuals



*Withouttitle, 2007*  
Wood carving  
20x26x16cm



*Withouttitle, 2010*  
Wood and metal sculpture on base  
70x36x20cm



*Untitled, 2010* Marble  
sculpture  
37x28x15cm



*Withouttitle, 2008*  
Old photo scratched and drawn  
42x32cm

# Useful information :

## Exhibition Dates

From February 17 to April 14, 2023

## Opening

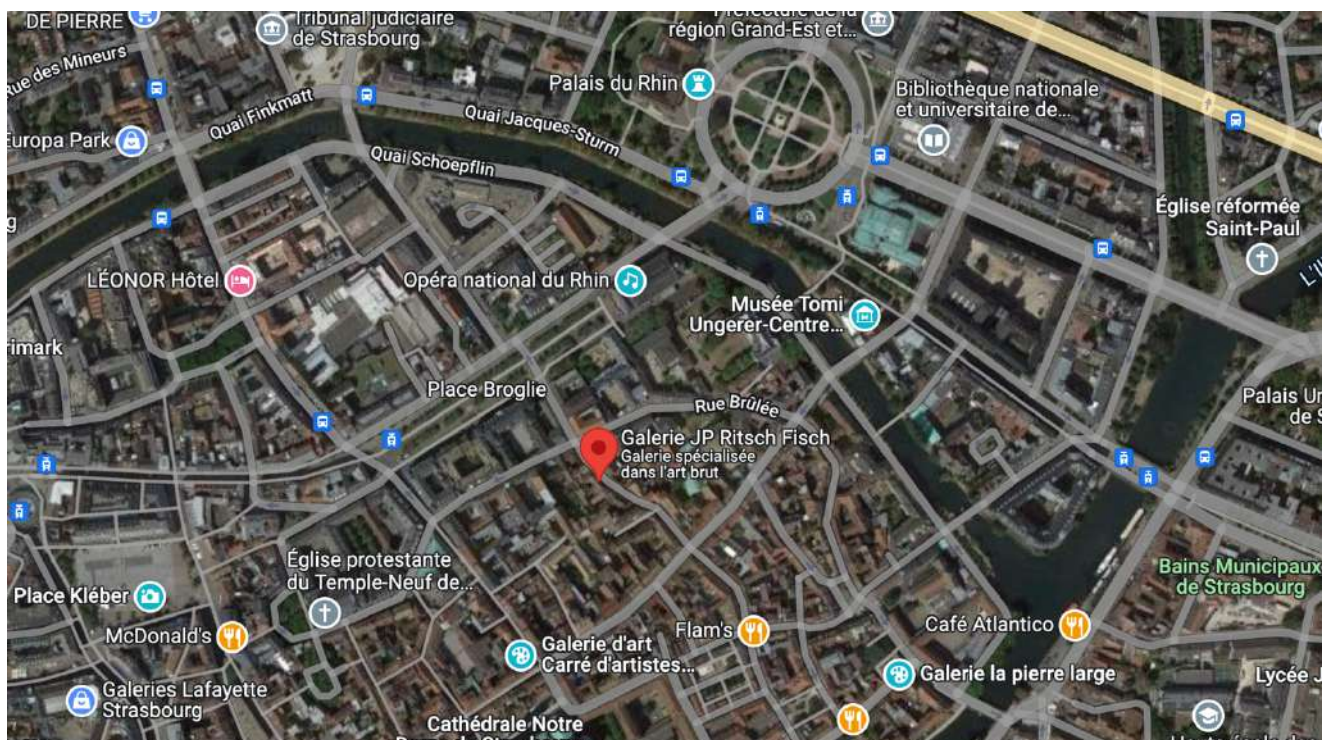
Friday February 17, 2023 from 6:30 p.m. in the presence of Hervé Bonhert  
6, rue des Charpentiers, 67000 Strasbourg

## Gallery opening hours

Tuesday to Friday, 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.  
Saturday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
And by appointment

## Access

By car: Opéra-Broglie car park, Impasse de Bischheim, 67000 Strasbourg  
By Tram: BCD line Broglie stop then 5 minutes walk



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