

GALERIA MARC DOMÈNECH

PRESS RELEASE

“Georges Noël. 1965-1975 / Paris-New York”

[October 10 – December 5, 2024]

To mark the centenary of the birth of Georges Noël (December 25, 1924 – November 26, 2010), at Galeria Marc Domènech we are pleased to present our first exhibition dedicated to this artist. The exhibition consists of more than 30 works, including paintings and works on paper, tracing one of the most complex and lesser-known periods in Georges Noël's career. The decade from 1965 to 1975 was a pivotal period for the artist and his artistic trajectory. It was during this time that Noël decided to leave Paris, where he had lived since 1958 and where he exhibited regularly, specially at the renowned Galerie Facchetti, to move to New York, where he would stay for 14 years. Upon arriving in New York, his work underwent a significant transformation. The characteristic elements that crowd Noël's works during his Paris years - incisions, signs, calligraphy, and gestures - disappeared, and his style shifted towards more ordered compositions with an abundance of geometric structures.

Emmanuel Guigon, author of the exhibition catalogue's text, in relation to the works produced in Paris, writes: “Georges Noël's painting envelops us in this body of memory, with all its hybridity and patchwork qualities. Thus, to the eyes, the image is the superimposition of layers (...) like the skin of crumbling walls under which there is only nameless matter. In the overflow of writing, between intense wear and restraint, traces often emerge, as if they were resurgences of the past.” Indeed, the paintings Georges Noël created in Paris between 1958 and 1965, constructed with a gestural virtuosity akin to automatic writing and titled 'palimpsests' by the artist, evoke primitivism and spiritual magic—worlds that deeply fascinated him during that time.

Around 1968, Noël began a radically different phase, which would foreshadow his New York period. The gestural signs and spontaneous calligraphy gave way to writing created with stencils. Though still interested in layering, matter, and collage, his works began introducing random arrangements of letters and numbers, as well as geometric compositions that would lead to his famous series 'Scores'.

Living in New York from 1969 and drawn to Hard Edge, Colour Field Painting, and Minimalism, Noël decided to strip his paintings of gestural elements, leaving only the basic orthogonal structures that had served as the background in his 1960s 'palimpsests.' From 1971 onwards, his painting became reduced to angles and an increasingly limited use of color. “I minimized my entire plastic vocabulary to the extreme. I began to remove the material for a year, allowing only the signs to intervene, and I made these signs orbit around geometry to explain, more brutally, what had happened at that time. I went from a superimposition of informal signs to a superimposition of formal signs, [...] from a multitude of signs emerging from my own

signature to a superimposition of signs based on right angles. In 1971, a new white period began, in which I used all shades of white, going from minimal material to the maximum, passing through raw canvas, almost white, on which the drawing stood out, much like in the early Palimpsests.”

This exhibition seeks to highlight the work of an artist who, despite his significance, remains largely unknown in our country. In fact, the last time an exhibition of his work was shown in Spain was at the Jorge Mara Gallery in Madrid in 1994, exactly 30 years ago now. Among the museums and collections that hold his work, we would highlight: Centre Pompidou/Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris; Pinault Collection, Paris; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY; The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Nationalgalerie, Berlin; Städtische Kunsthalle Mannheim, Mannheim; Museo del Novecento, Milan; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Ise Cultural Foundation, Tokyo.

BIOGRAPHY

Georges Noël (1924-2010), born in Béziers, France, to a family with Catalan ancestry, showed an early inclination towards art and plastic creation. During his childhood, his family moved to Pau, where he spent most of his youth. At 17, during the German occupation of France, he joined the resistance alongside his father, undertaking missions such as guiding downed British pilots across the Pyrenees into Spain. After World War II, during which he worked as an aviation technician, he decided to study art and architecture in Toulouse.

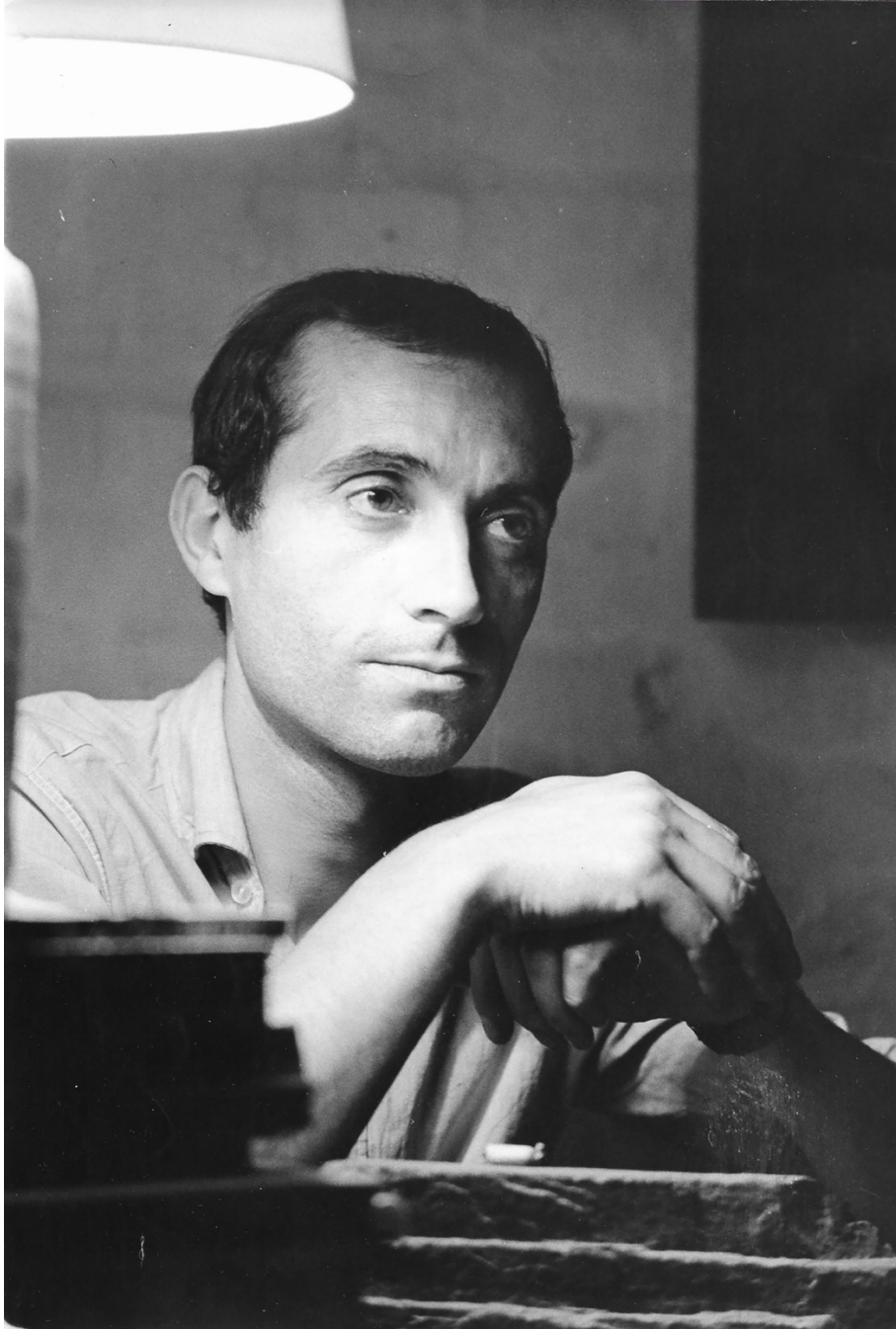
In 1956, he moved to Paris, where he began his artistic career in an environment dominated by the fervor of abstraction and the informalist movement, which emphasized spontaneity, textures, and a rejection of traditional form. Noël was deeply impressed by the works of Jean Dubuffet and the informalist artists, and he began to develop his own technique based on the manipulation of textured surfaces. One of the distinctive features of his work is the use of materials like sand, plaster, white glue, pigment, and other substances applied to the canvas to create rough, dense surfaces. These textures were often scratched, engraved, or worked with his hands.

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, Noël had established himself as one of the leading figures in the abstract movement in France. He began exhibiting in galleries in Paris, such as Galerie de France and Galerie Paul Facchetti, gaining international recognition. In 1962, he held his first solo exhibition in the United States at the prestigious John Lefebvre Gallery in New York. This experience in America was transformative for Noël, allowing him to closely observe the work of American avant-garde artists, particularly that of Agnes Martin, whose influence encouraged him to explore new directions in his work.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Georges Noël continued to evolve as an artist, alternating between France and the United States. His works from this period reflect a fusion of the influences of American geometric gesturalism and European informalism, with a continuous focus on texture and matter. He participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions at prestigious institutions and galleries worldwide, solidifying his reputation as an internationally renowned artist. He also maintained a strong relationship with the world of poetry and literature, collaborating with writers and poets. This connection with the written word is evident in many of his works, where signs and inscriptions seem to evoke hidden or poetic meanings.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, Noël continued to experiment with new materials and techniques, though he remained obsessed with the mystery of forms, symbols, and textures.

Georges Noël passed away in Paris in 2010, leaving behind a vast artistic legacy spanning more than five decades. His work, while associated with movements like informalism, was never confined to a single label. His constant search for a unique visual language based on matter, gesture, and symbol makes him a key figure in contemporary European art. Today, his work is housed in numerous public and private collections and continues to be recognized and studied, notably by prestigious galleries such as Galerie Christophe Gaillard in Paris or Galeria Marc Domènech in Barcelona.



Georges Noël, 1964