

the O.G.

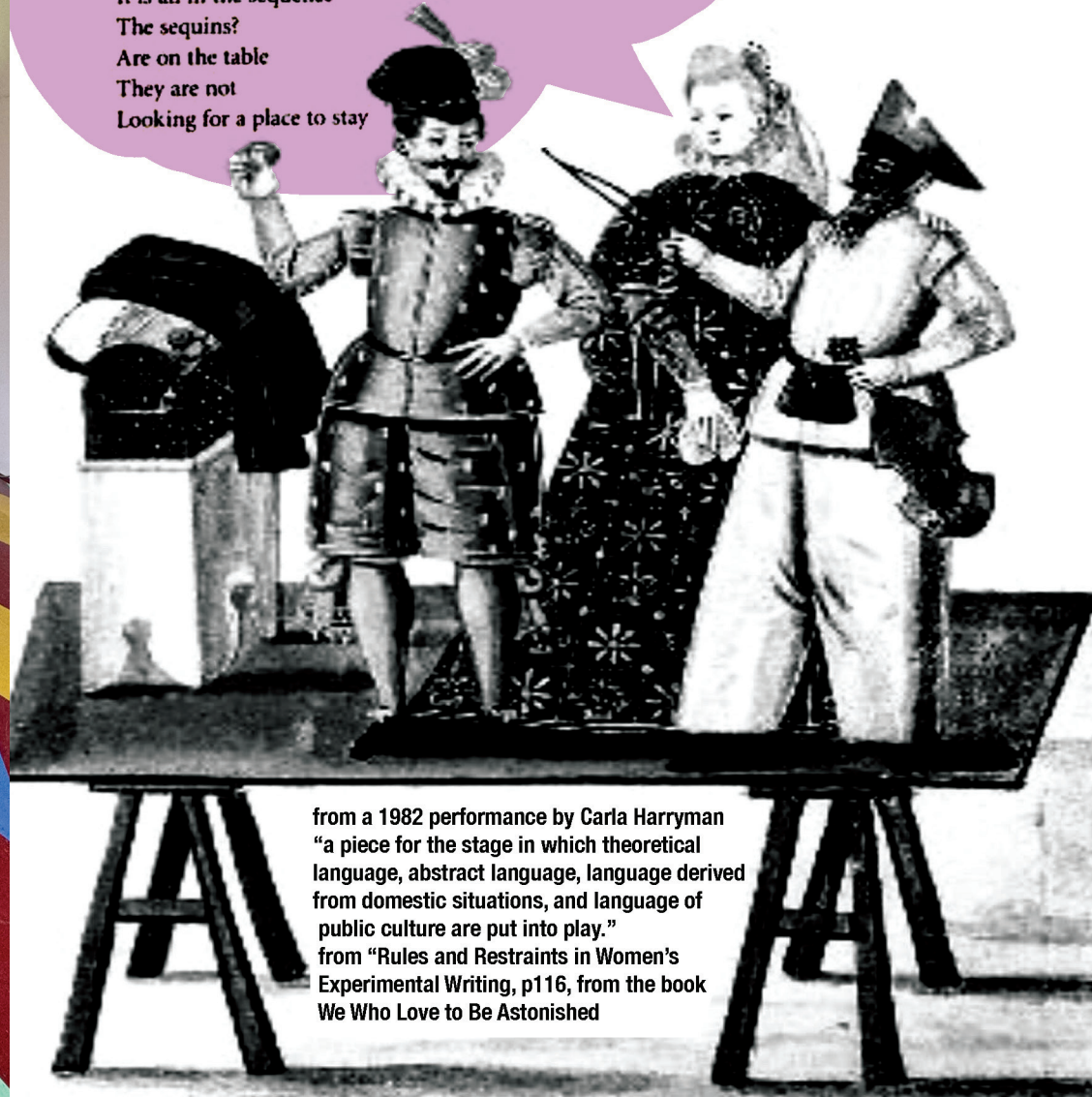
vol 17, spring/summer 2026

THE HARLEQUIN'S DOG

made for "The Harlequin's Dog" at Galerie Chantal Crousel,
Amy Sillman, Clément Rodzielski, and Étienne-Martin
June/July 2026



Oh, theory
Yes
There is nothing better
Than a theory
But confess
What?
We will eating anything.
Anything?
The book
The idea
Or the product
I would prefer that the painting resemble something a little less dry
This has nothing to do with technique
It is all in the sequence
The sequins?
Are on the table
They are not
Looking for a place to stay



from a 1982 performance by Carla Harryman
"a piece for the stage in which theoretical
language, abstract language, language derived
from domestic situations, and language of
public culture are put into play."
from "Rules and Restraints in Women's
Experimental Writing, p116, from the book
We Who Love to Be Astonished

Clément Rodzielski



description of Etienne-Martin's studio:

At the back of a courtyard is what at first sight appears to be a junk shop, full of unsaleable leftovers, dumped in complete disorder and covered over with a thick coating of dust. Etienne-Martin buys in the Flea Market only items which are completely unsaleable; accumulates ill-loved or formerly loved objects, forgotten in attics or cellars and collected by junkmen like others collect lost cats and dogs.

In this studio, is a piled up collection of hats, dead clocks, instruments, a motorcyclist's helmet, a gun, an anvil, all kinds of taxidermied animals, trunks, chests, boxes, huge sacks, ornaments, color-prints, winches hanging from the ceiling, chains, pulleys, tackles and rails, revolving platforms, machines for sawing, polishing, scraping, perforating, like a carpenter's shop and taxidermist....



La sculpture est pour tous.

**Ce qu'elle est? Vénérable mais non divinité
donc un support de méditation de connaissance—vous fait participer à la vie générale et universelle.
Devant une œuvre
On l'aime
On a de l'indifférence
On se révolte
Donc rôle du sculpteur
Celui du spectateur**

Sculpture is for everyone.

**What is it? Venerable, but not a deity,
therefore a support for meditation of knowledge—it allows you to participate in general and universal life.
Before a work of art:
We love it
We are indifferent
We rebel
Therefore, the role of the sculptor
That of the viewer**

a few Questions for M. ÉTIENNE-MARTIN

We love your work. Do you like our show, do you approve?

yes. I'm very happy about it.

Do you feel how much I love your work?

yes. I know.

Why did you change to making sculptures with so many colors toward the end of your life?

towards the end of one's life, one is more open to colors. I am very fluid, very open, very aware of the cultures and beliefs of the world, from Brazil to everywhere else. I love color--I would have loved to design dance costumes with flowing fabrics. Look at how I made my manteaux...!

Is the title of the sculpture "Arlequin" or "Novalis" ?

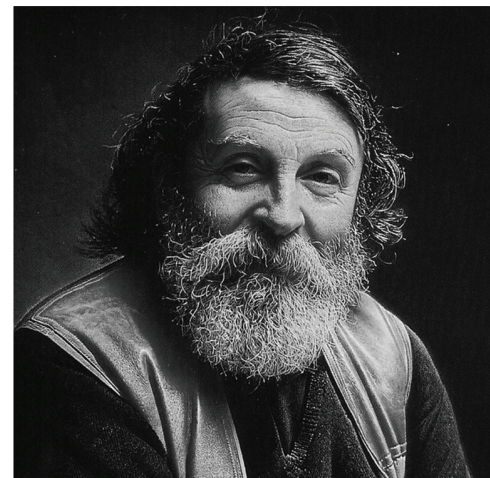
It is both.

(please don't pronounce it with that nasal american accent! say softly, breathily, from the throat and chest, "Arlequin"...)

Le petit homme de la lune, where does he come from ?

my childhood memories are deeply important to me, that's where my ideas and my sensibilities come from. I was a delicate and sensitive little kid, not a macho. This is something important to know about me and my work.

Interview conducted with Lisa Signorini, artist and medium psychic



la peinture abstraite malgré elle:
A CONVERSATION WITH T. E. REID



An abstract painting

walks into a bar.

THIS IS
OF COURSE
A
RIDICULOUS
IDEA.

BUT WHAT
AM I,
THOUGH?

I started to wonder last winter, what is a harlequin, anyway? What's he doing there in the bar with all the regular people? Does anyone notice that they're having a drink with an abstract painting? Maybe this question made sense while the clown show that is the American government was busy unmasking itself as a brutal and rapacious authoritarian regime. But then, what's a harlequin in particular, what's a saltimbanque? And what's this nexus between those figures and abstraction? The harlequin's outfit alone is a semiotic indicator for an unreliable character-- like the way stripes are-- an oscillation where you can't tell what's figure and what's ground--but now crazier, a patch of foolishness in a pattern and without perspective, a zone of flat gaudy checkerboard plopped into in the dim blue space of an absinthe bar, where everyone else is gently rounded. Is abstraction a relief, refreshing, like comedy? Is that why the first years of the 20th C explode with an overlap between abstraction and the circus? Bergson published his book on humor in 1900, Picasso paints his first seated harlequin in 1901, Freud published his book on jokes in 1905. So I went to MoMA to take another look at some local harlequins, from 1921, Picasso's "The Three Musicians" from 1921.

I've looked at this painting a hundred times, but this time I notice there's a DOG crouching behind the musicians, visible only in silhouette and snippets of fur, paws and belly. The dog's tail sticks up between the harlequin's legs, just like in a Guston painting. Isn't a dog like a harlequin-- a roommate from another species, unable to speak your language but friendly and funny. The harlequin is also a stranger, someone from the edge of town, an outsider. Does a harlequin also have a dog? If so, is that the harlequin's harlequin, or dog's dog? (Is that like a painter's painter? I've been told I'm a painter's painter.) I love a three-way relationship-- and the classic comic construction is three. I'm in a 3-person show with an old man (Étienne-Martin) and a young man (Clément Rodzielski). We decide to name the show "The Harlequin's Dog."

In May, I'm in Paris, and a friend, Ezra, says, "hey, I know a clown expert here named Tim." And I thought, immediately, I must meet him! We should go to the Louvre together and look at my favorite painting there, the Pierrot, aka Gilles, by Watteau. a staggering, enigmatic and unforgettable painting of a clown. The whole idea of staging this encounter was structured like a joke: an abstract painter and a clown-expert walk into a museum. In fact, PAINTING is structured like a joke for me. Or I approach it that way. I'm dead serious about painting but jokes are of course the flip side of tragedy.

To introduce Tim: he's performed, written, studied clowns and comedy and theater and performance, and now he's writing about the buoyancy of clowns. He is the kind of person who actually knows clowns personally. When we first met, we talked about the difficulty of translating the word "buoyant" into French, and later I texted him that I'd asked some children how to say, "bouncy castles" in French, and he wrote back "okay now we're getting to the good stuff." He looks at the mechanics and conditions of change, the bounce itself, and the way clowns and harlequins have gone from speech to silence and back to speech. I suspect that he is a person who laughs when things go awry, as do I. It seems essential to go to the Louvre him to see Gilles, to look at the painting at the oblique angle of his eyes, an expert, who KNOWS things, about what comedy IS, and what a clown IS.

(still thinking about the relationship of the animal or animality to abstraction. why is it Harlequin's Dog? usually the fool or clown has a bauble, the scepter or stick that is like a double of them.. for Harlequin it was the slapstick, the actual flat board that had the contraption that when it was swung a piece slapped itself. that was also like his magic wand, what effected the transformations. the DOG here does sort of double the position of Harlequin, or the clown)

PIERROT, AKA GILLES, IS A WONDER.

The name of the painting is still curious to me. That it is "Pierrot, formerly known as Gilles." that they don't actually know what the painting was titled. Gilles was the more generic version of this character. He was the real French everyman, the peasant character. Pierrot was definitely its heightened being, what it became as a clown. it was definitely Pierrot that Deburau played.

WHO IS DEBURAU? Jean-Gaspard DEBURAU: a Czech-French mime, 1796 –1846, who performed at the Funambules. His famous creation was the pantomimic Pierrot, godfather of all the Pierrots of Romantic, Symbolist, and early Modernist theater and art.

but the "formerly known as Gilles" implies something of the transformation. that it had occurred. the painting itself, that he does not wear a mask, or whiten his face, and seems young and makes no real expression, all implies more Gilles than Pierrot.

Gilles stands there upright with an attitude of slightly disinterested attention, detached but bemused, benevolent but unreachable. After a while, you realize that that his gaze is simultaneously toward you and away from you, past you, clearly THINKING, but really NOT thinking about you.

He's looking out the way a performer looks out at an audience.

Watteau's Pierrot is so powerful because of how the figure squares his shoulder. He presents his body like a flat screen. In doing so some other relationship to perspective and shape begins to occur. This is maybe why his body seems like a sphere. As Nicholas said he seemed to have a spotlight on his middle.

We are both fascinated by his body-- his small-ish head, with its halo of a little hat, seems smaller than it should be, smaller than his shoes which are more at our eye-level. Because of this slight foreshortening, there's a gentle implication of two perspectives at once: the upright verticality of his pose and the slight perspectival diminishment from his outsize feet back toward his little head, further back in space. In other words, two directional pulls at once: vertical and diagonal or horizontal, meaning that Gilles is not stable, exactly. He's like a stack of boxes that could topple.

REID: "Of all performers, clowns might be the most mundane, in that their work - attending the etymological roots of the mundane - firmly and fixedly is of the world. Earthy, coarse and material, even as indefatigably buoyant, they resist transcendence. Rebounding from whatever slip, trip, stumble or fall, their ascents only ever return them to the surface, back to the world."

BERLANT: "Virtually all comedy theorists are structuralists."

We have a mutual interest in GROUND.

yeah, I love this connection we both make between the material consequences of disruption, and the relationship between a disruption and an ongoing-ness. You brought up this idea of the "vanishing point," and I just love that term, in the sense that abstraction then vanishes that very idea, that there's a neat "ending" to what one can see. Abstraction makes horizon line and vanishing point a kind of fiction.

"The ground itself falls away. A clown works between these two registers, which might distinguish them from comedians and other comic performers. They are both funny ha ha, telling jokes, producing specific laughter, and funny strange, in that the world, reality itself, seems to lose definition or solidity. And it is not simply in dissolving the world that a clown performs, but through their capacity for and with humor, to stay upright, and maintain or rediscover equilibrium. That is their buoyancy."

Back to Pierrot aka Gilles, the spatial disruption of the figure is subtle. Gilles' body gently presses both forward (at the shoulder) and then compresses backwards around his upper back, like someone who is squeezing their spine in a weird way at a yoga class. He looks about to topple, and his hands hang down in front, weighted for balance like his only ballast. They also cradle one of the strangest parts of the painting-- the monochromatic white ovoid in his belly area, shaped like an upside-down lightbulb or an upside-down head. If you squint at Gilles' belly, the buttons on his jacket pockets look like eyes, and the little dark notch at the top of his pant legs forms a mouth. I wondered if this little visual pun was intentional? It seems "modern"-- a pun, a kind of unravelling of sense, or of reality.

["There is] the etymology of clown, of which, the Oxford English Dictionary states: "it is clear that we have here a word meaning originally "clod, clot, lump," which like these words themselves, has been applied in various languages to a clumsy. Appearing in English in the 1500s, the word invoked naive country bumpkins wandering into the city."

This undoing reality seems part of the comic, and specific in some ways to both clowns and to abstraction, as you're invoking it. I'd say here too that clowns and clown figures often are anachronistic. Harlequin was created somewhere around 1584-1586 when Tristano Martinelli first appeared in France performing the role of Arlequin. Martinelli seems to have gotten the name from a devil character in French religious drama. (Also interesting: about ten years later Martinelli also had a court position with the Duke of Mantua. All street performers, vendors, and charlatans needed a license from him in order to perform.) Pierrot is also a bit of an anachronism, or displaced. Supposedly a part of the Comédie-Italienne, he was a French character, created by Molière, who evolved and developed in France, ultimately displacing Harlequin at the center of the French pantomime. An analogous thing happens in England, where The Clown takes a role in the Harlequinade of the British Pantomime, and likewise displaces the Harlequin by the early nineteenth century.

Back to Pierrot aka Gilles, the spatial disruption of the figure is subtle. Gilles' body gently presses both forward (at the shoulder) and then compresses backwards around his upper back, like someone who is squeezing their spine in a weird way at a yoga class. He looks about to topple, and his hands hang down in front, weighted for balance like his only ballast. They also cradle one of the strangest parts of the painting-- the monochromatic white ovoid in his belly area, shaped like an upside-down lightbulb or an upside-down head. If you squint at Gilles' belly, the buttons on his jacket pockets look like eyes, and the little dark notch at the top of his pant legs forms a mouth. I wondered if this little visual pun was intentional? It seems "modern"-- a pun, a kind of unravelling of sense, or of reality.

that line of people in a pit!
that donkey's eye!

"Comédie" was a more general term for the companies and sort of theater they made that did not connect directly to the comedic, as in a comedian telling jokes or strictly producing laughter. That would come later. Genres themselves are getting made at this time. "Comedien/nes" too is just the generic word for actor in French, and commedia dell'arte did combine multiple genres, sometimes in one work.

Carlo Goldoni coined the term commedia dell'arte in 1750 while trying to reform Italian theater. Commedia dell'arte for him referred to an old or vulgar form. Goldoni wanted to make Italian theater more dignified, written rather than improvised and without masks. Commedia dell'arte means, more or less, commercial theater, that is, the craft or business of performing, in distinction to something like the art of drama, and functioned as a blanket term for various preceding forms of the Italian theater.

There is also the relationship of Pierrot's face to the body. It seems secondary, and in that way functions like a mask. Pierrot may be a precursor to deadpan, even in the Tina Post sense. This might mean it's that because of the whiteness made or developed against blackness, in the way Pierrot displaces Harlequin. The mask maybe does not come off exactly but becomes internalized. is that possible? is that what happens? is that what Pierrot is looking at?

Paintings hang in front of nothing.

But this isn't really true-- this is what institutional critique is about, but I think all conceptual, or let's say philosophical, art shows us this.

But each painting covers a place in the world where nothing exists.

But the walls exist. That's why I like to touch (or besmirch) the walls, floors, the corners of a room where a painting hangs. Because in fact they are not voids. I think THIS is like the sense of extemporaneity you've described, but spatially, and philosophically. The whole room is a hybrid, not a void with meaning in it. The thing is to address it with your body, which is very much alive. This is what I meant by improvisational.

In the painting itself Gilles or Pierrot acts like a painting. Why he squares his shoulders and makes a screen. This is the making of the "blank canvas" like Nicholas said. It is the making of the "empty stage." That is what Diderot did with his FOURTH WALL.

I want the wall of an "art gallery" to be different: both real and abstract, activated, as the painting is both real and abstract.

That is to me the comic impulse, to want to re-assemble your very conditions.



**PIERROT
IS
THAT
FOURTH
WALL
BEFORE
IT
EXISTS.**

But it would be impossible
to go back there.

That's what it means to keep making paintings
after the time when paintings are "back there."

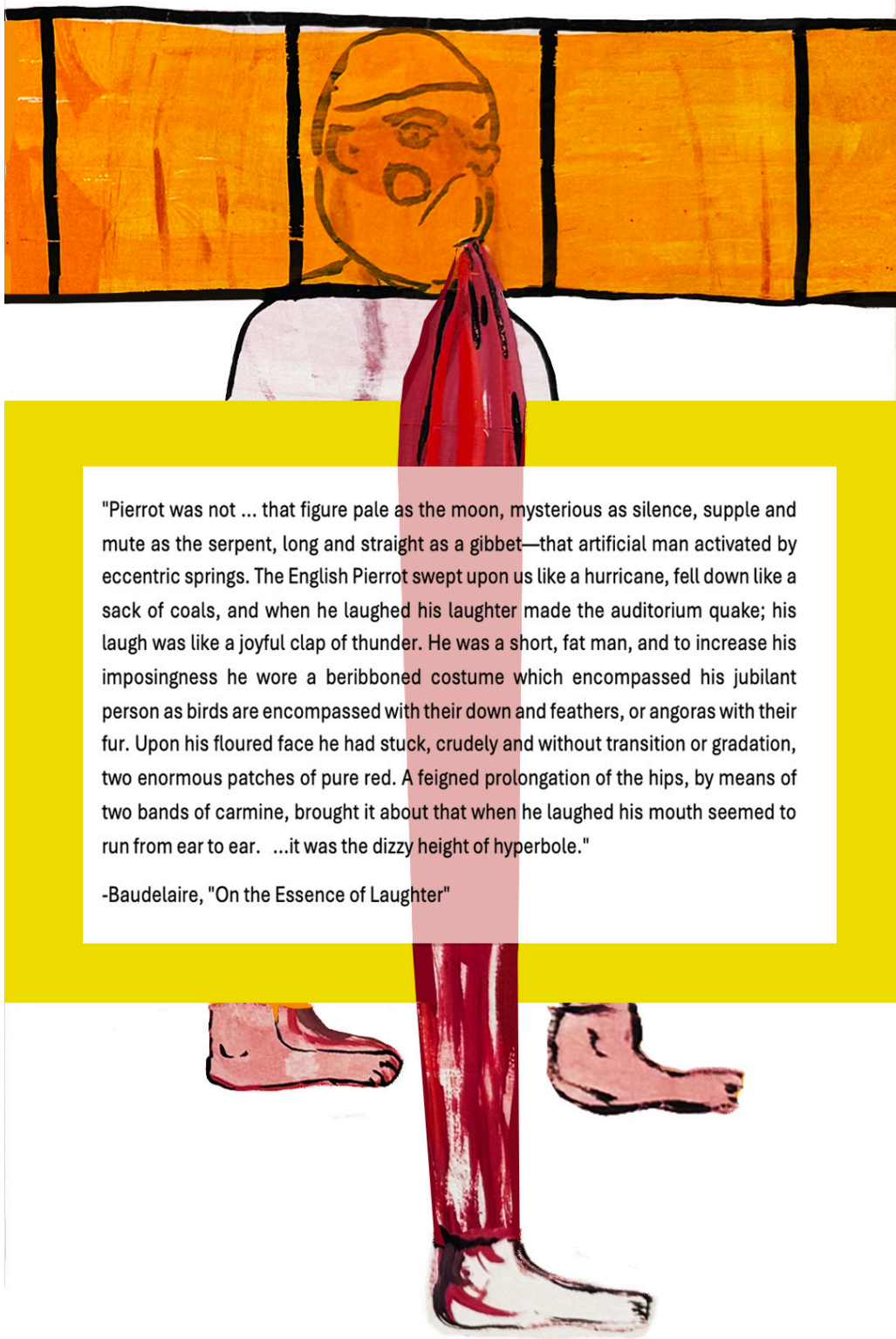
In the hundred years between Pierrot being painted, and it being rediscovered, a lot happens. Just prior, in 1717, John Rich introduced the Harlequin character to England under the name of "Lun" for "lunatic." Its physicality was more dancing than the Italians acrobatics, and he played it silent because he had an annoying voice. In 1724, Rich developed the British Pantomime form which had been invented in England by John Weaver as a neo-classical form. The end was the Harlequinade, which generally includes a set of stock characters from the commedia dell'arte. Harlequin with his magic slapstick would turn all the characters into these few commedia figures, and they would chase each other. It became a dominant form especially after 1737, when there was a Licensing Act in England, requiring all plays get pre-approval. This led to lots of pantomime scenarios and productions of Shakespeare as they would not face censorship.

the trajectory of the comic and abstraction that I started thinking about in conversation with you is in dance, more than painting. In the late 1880s you have these Symbolists writing poems about Pierrot in Belgium and France in which Pierrot appears in his sort of Baudelaire-ish form...almost a bored dandy figure.

Pierrot is a hinge figure for the Symbolists. More so than Harlequin because of the silence, it seems, and his iconicity. After that Watteau painting reappears in 1828, Pierrot becomes a creature of visual and literary arts, more than performance. It goes through a decadence. It becomes as a character, sentimental, and overly romantic, and then becomes even violent.

Arnold Schoenberg's 1912 atonal "melodrama" Pierrot Lunaire uses those symbolist poems by Giraud, but I think the REAL clown step was this fantastic Russian futurist opera, "Victory Over the Sun," made in 1913 by poet/artists Aleksei Kruchenykh, Velimir Khlebnikov, and Mikhail Matyushin, with Malevich stage design. It was totally modern, and played like once or something, to a wildly negative audience, at Luna Park in St Petersburg. But then cut to Picasso and Serge Diaghilev's Ballet Russe, and artists including Cocteau and Erik Satie, whose circus-themed ballet "Parade" premiered in Paris in 1917, and honestly those sets and costumes are key Picasso works, to me. And then to Oskar Schlemmer and his Triadisches Ballett --he was already thinking about it in 1912 with the Schoenberg Pierrot, but his ballet didn't appear til 1922 in Stuttgart, with music by Hindemith.





"Pierrot was not ... that figure pale as the moon, mysterious as silence, supple and mute as the serpent, long and straight as a gibbet—that artificial man activated by eccentric springs. The English Pierrot swept upon us like a hurricane, fell down like a sack of coals, and when he laughed his laughter made the auditorium quake; his laugh was like a joyful clap of thunder. He was a short, fat man, and to increase his imposingness he wore a beribboned costume which encompassed his jubilant person as birds are encompassed with their down and feathers, or angoras with their fur. Upon his floured face he had stuck, crudely and without transition or gradation, two enormous patches of pure red. A feigned prolongation of the hips, by means of two bands of carmine, brought it about that when he laughed his mouth seemed to run from ear to ear. ...it was the dizzy height of hyperbole."

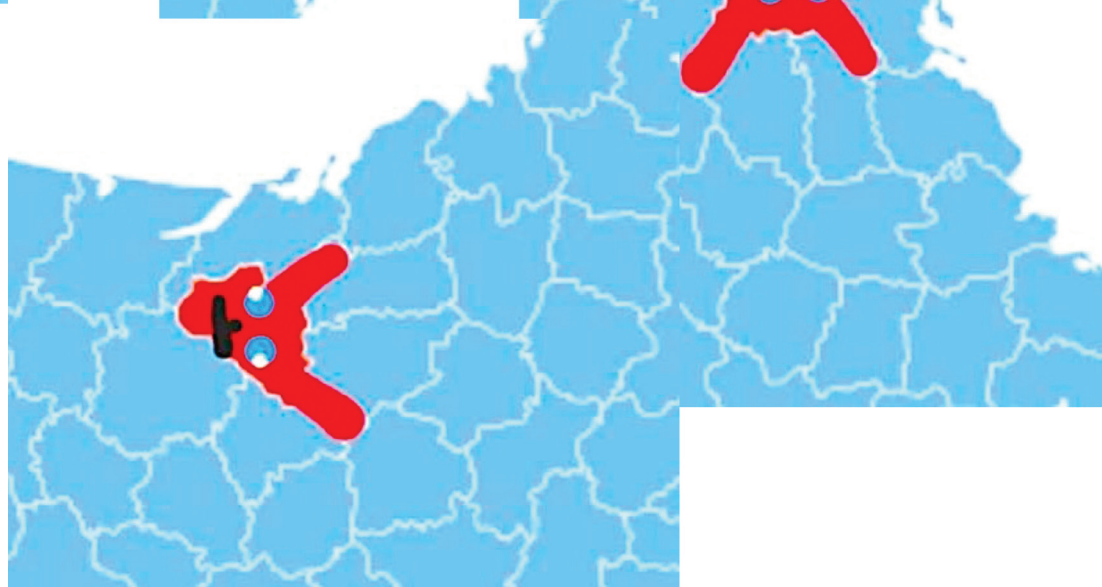
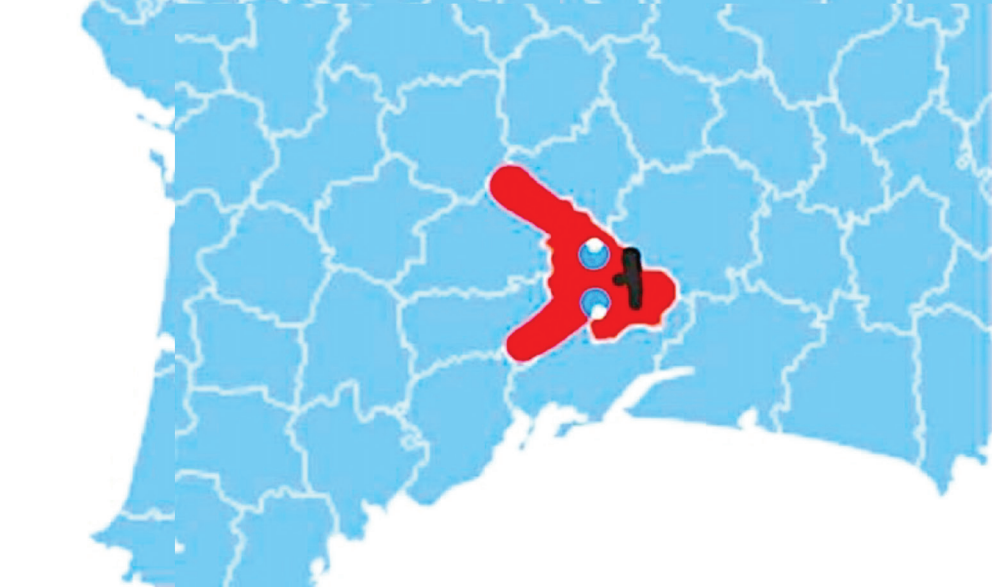
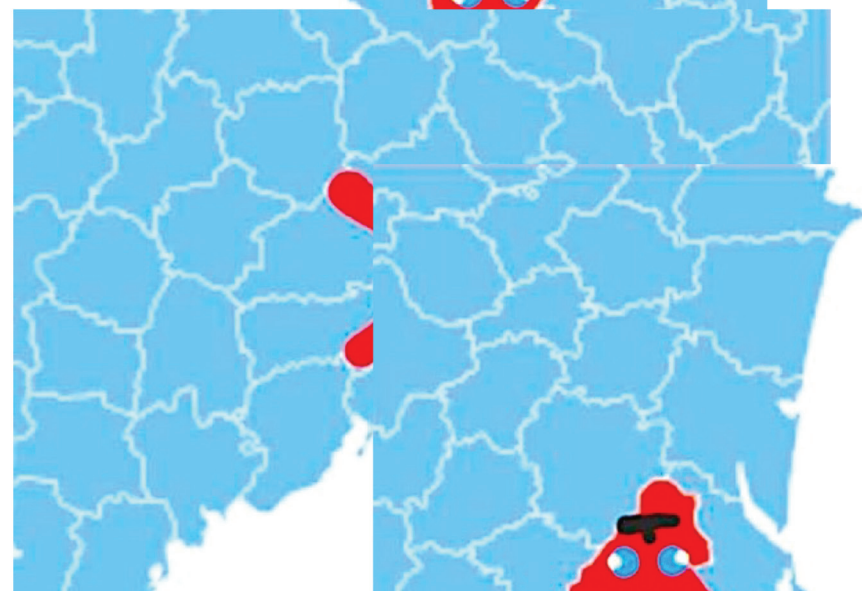
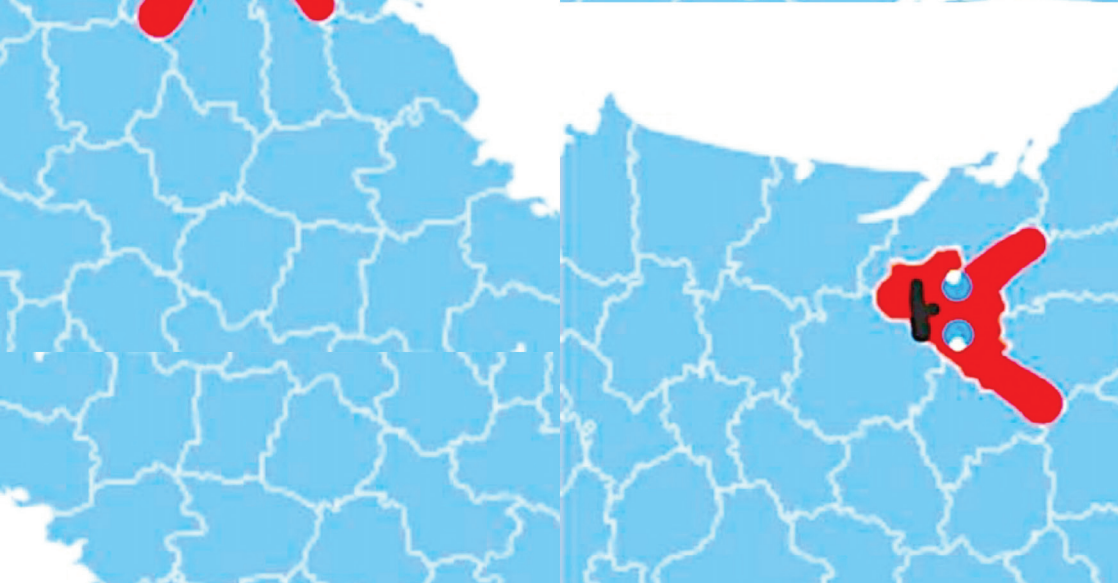
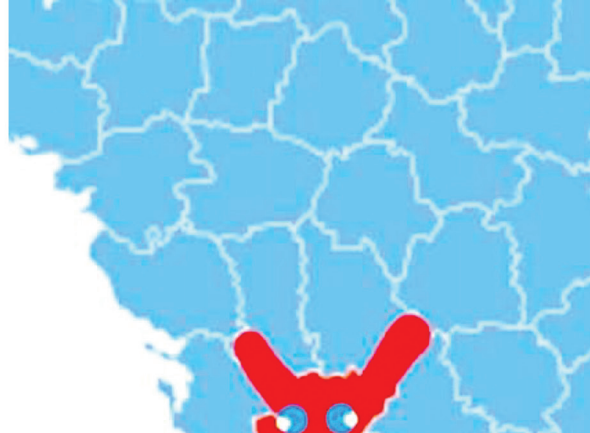
-Baudelaire, "On the Essence of Laughter"

Pulcinella is not a noun; he is an adverb: he is not a what but a how.



GIANDOMENICO: You are an idea, but idea of what? ←

PULCINELLA. Pròpeto chisto è 'o punto: je songo 'na idea senza 'a cosa. [That is the point: I am only an idea, for which there is no thing.]





Into an exterior world
In which it cannot survive
The poem is therefore
A representation of an edge

Along whose banks the artists kissed
And gave alms of hieroglyphs
Calligraphies of disorder
Much needed

CARLA HARRYMAN

from Open Box (Improvisations)
1st published 2007, new edition Belladonna* 2026

Pourquoi la peinture

Ça barbouille, ça se barbouille, ça se maquille, ça cherche à maquiller. Il faut en passer par les précautions indispensables (formelles) historiques scientifiques. Mais vous aurez beau faire vous en aurez partout (vous en aurez partout); sur les mains, à la bouche, au cul, ça se colore un peu partout. Et plus il se débat et plus il se maquille, qui ressemble à sa femme, qui ressemble à sa mère, qui ressemble à sa fille, qui ressemble à ses dents, qui ressemble à sa langue, qui ressemble à sa bouche qui dégueule et qui tête et qui, tête dedans, épithe-ton s'arrête. La peinture, cette gourmandise archaïque qui n'a pas de nom, fait jaser les fols. A chaque ingurgitation, à chaque injection, à chaque déjection, ça peint - poilu sans moussetache, ça mousse (ça se fait moucher) et ça tache (ça se fait toucher). C'est avant, c'est derrière, ça n'est ni homme, ni femme, ça tête et ça se fait téter. C'est en somme quelque chose comme le fondement de toute organisation possible - ceux qui s'assoient dessus n'en ont pas moins le cul merdeux.

Autant pour la phase (la face) orale — autant pour la phase (la face) anale, quand ça marche bien sans haut et bas, sans commencement ni fin. En somme autant ce déchet qu'un autre, autant un enfant qu'un déchet, autant une femme qu'un enfant, autant un homme qu'une merde, ça s'organise avec les organes. Ce qui est vieux comme ça, ce vieux déchet savagissant pulse à la roue et s'organise de la jouissance à la plaie. C'est en pulsion quoi et ça s'organise, c'est le vieux fond insatisfait. Ça manque, personne ne fera semblant d'en être sur-pris, nous en serons tous toujours les premiers surpris. C'est ça, c'est delà, c'est ici, sur la cuisse dans la main la cuisse et la main etc. Et si ça fonctionne, ça colore, el comme ça fonctionne ça peint.

Marcelin Pleynet, 1972, from Art et Littérature

Why paint?

It smears, it smears itself, it puts on makeup, it tries to put on makeup. You have to go through the indispensable (formal) historical and scientific precautions. But no matter what you do, you'll get it everywhere (you'll have an orgy of it); on the hands, in the mouth, on the ass, it gets colored a little everywhere. And the more he struggles, the more he puts on makeup, who resembles his wife, who resembles his mother, who resembles his daughter, who resembles his teeth, who resembles his tongue, who resembles his mouth that vomits and sucks and, head in it, epithet-ton stops. Paint, this archaic indulgence that has no name, makes the madmen chatter. With each ingestion, with each injection, with each excrement, it paints - hairy without foam stain, it foams (it gets its nose blown) and it stains (it gets touched). It's before, it's behind, it's neither man nor woman, it suckles and is suckled. It's essentially something like the foundation of all possible organization—those who sit on it still have shitty asses.

As much for the oral phase (the face)—as much for the anal phase (the face), when it works well without ups and downs, without beginning or end. In short, this waste as much as any other, a child as much as waste, a woman as much as a child, a man as much as shit, it organizes itself with the organs. What's as old as that, this old, sly waste, pulses to the wheel and organizes itself from pleasure to wound. It's instinctual, and it organizes itself; it's the old, unsatisfied core. It's lacking, no one will pretend to be surprised, we will all always be the first to be surprised. That's it, that's over there, that's here, on the thigh in the hand the thigh and the hand etc. And if it works, it colors, and since it works it paints.

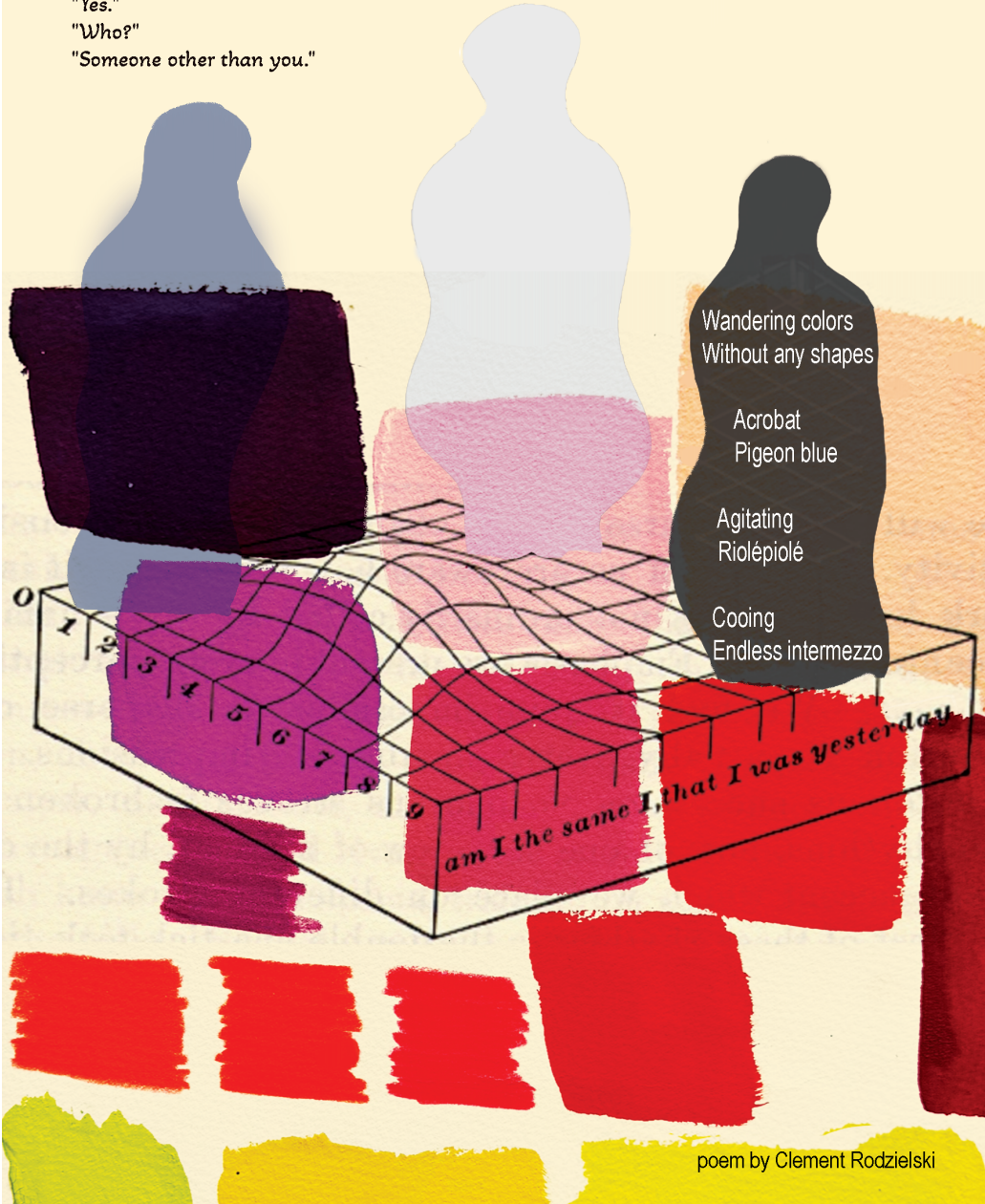


drawing above: by Camille Henrot, Study for Catherine "Cat" Harlequina, the Art Critic, 2025



drawing below: by Beniamino Foschini, 2026

"Do you hear?" he asked.
 "No," was the unconsciously written reply.
 "But to answer you must hear."
 "Yes, quite so."
 "Then how do you manage?"
 "I don't know."
 "There must be some one who hears me."
 "Yes."
 "Who?"
 "Someone other than you."



HUGEST THANKS to Niklas Svennung!! & Chantal Crousel, Elena Cardin, Markus Lichti, Philippe Manzone, Céline Cormier, Eglantine Mercader, Fan Rong & everyone else at Crousel. Thanks to Ezra Gray, Jake Jackmauh, & Nate Heiges for all their hard work. Hugest thanks to Clément Rodzielski, Étienne-Martin, Dorian Dumonteil, & clown/expert TIM REID who is just amazing, and thxx to Ezra for the intro. THX all who contributed: Juliet Koss, Camille Henrot, Estelle Hoy, Beniamino Foschini, Benjamin Thorel, Charlotte Houette, Francois Lancien-Guilberteau, & all other friends/fam. XXXX A.



hard to see here but the harlequin's dog is under the table! there's his tail!

ceramic "Tadzio" by Juliet Koss



€1 / \$1

thank you