

# MODERNISM

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**Philippe GRONON: Versos**

**May 16–June 29, 2019**

Modernism is pleased to present its first one-person exhibition of works by French artist Philippe GRONON.

In *Versos*, his first series working with color, Gronon has photographed the backside of paintings by modern masters, presenting each work at actual size.

Since the late 1980s, Philippe Gronon has been developing a body of work with a view camera. From shutter release to print, he has combined the specific resources of gelatin silver and digital processes in accordance with the planned result. His subjects have been those that have a function of physical or mental transition, of exchange, passage, or communication (elevator doors, X-ray plates, blackboards, lithographic stones, etc.). Working in black and white, each object was photographed frontally, filling the whole image, eliminating any context, anecdote, or picturesqueness.

*Versos*, begun in 2005, therefore constitute a logical sequel to the series that preceded it. His first series working with color, Gronon has photographed the backside of paintings by modern masters, presenting each work at actual size. At the same time, however, they effect a kind of reversal of perspective. By choosing paintings (based on the aesthetic of the verso side), Gronon has taken an object whose value lies, precisely, in its façade, and yet, here what he shows is not the front, as with his other objects, but the back. Because these are paintings, color is *de rigueur*, as is the way he surrounds the image with white, as in traditional photography. Suddenly, instead of showing us the obverse, he takes us behind the scenes, approaching the masterpiece via the scullery, the wings, the nuts, the bolts.

This becomes more risky when the identity of the recto becomes known and is accompanied by more and more noteworthy information (signatures, markings, museum labels, etc.). The documentary interest also grows and threatens to overwhelm. The greater this interest, the longer it takes us to really look at the photographic work. This predominance of the anecdotal is necessarily heightened by the fame and popularity of the referent.

But never in his work does Gronon strain for effects, or seek to provoke emotion. He strives to grasp the object, which is meticulously chosen and meticulously framed, with the greatest legibility or—in



*Verso n°18, Tête de jeune fille, par Pablo Picasso, Collection Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2007, color analog photography, digital pigment print; Edition: 5 + 3 AP, 33 ½ x 26 ¾ inches.*

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photographic terms—with the best possible definition. There is, for this, no privileged moment, as there is in the photography of events. The meaning of what the photograph conveys is never either betrayed or hidden. But it is, although fixed in its literal obviousness, disconnected from its context and from the function that is its *raison d'être*.



*Verso n°23, Love, par Robert Indiana, collection particulière en dépôt au Mamac, Nice, 2007, color analog photography, digital pigment print; Edition: 3 + 3 AP, 65 x 65 inches.*

Philippe Gronon has exhibited widely in Europe including solo shows at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (1997), Centre Régional d'art Contemporain, Montbéliard, France (2001 and 2013), Mamco Geneva (2003 and 2010), Villa Medici, Rome (2010), Musée des beaux-arts, Nantes (2010), Musée des Beaux arts de Dijon & Musée Magnin Dijon (2012), Musée Picasso, Paris (2016), and in group exhibitions, including La Force de l'Art and Grand Palais (2006), Centre Pompidou (2006 and 2007), Foundation Prada (2014), and currently at the Musée de Grenoble.

Modernism is pleased to invite the public to attend an opening reception on **Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup>**, from 5:30-8PM.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CALL: 415/541-0461 / FAX: 415/541-0425 / [INFO@MODERNISMINC.COM](mailto:INFO@MODERNISMINC.COM)

HI-RES IMAGES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.