

Critics' choice

Life&Arts

Visual arts Jackie Wullschläger

Un Art Autre: Abstraction in Postwar Paris

Lévy Gorvy, London

Days after meeting Joan Mitchell in Paris in 1954, Jean Paul Riopelle appeared at her door with a huge bouquet made of rolled canvases from the Lefebvre-Foinet art store: an expression of confidence that this expatriate couple, from Chicago and Canada, would play big roles in reinvigorating painting in the postwar French capital.

Also at work in 1950s-60s Paris were the Californian painter Sam Francis, who said of his rich stained colour on white fields "I'm doing pure late Monets" — though he was influenced too by Zen Buddhism encountered in Tokyo; and by Zao Wou-Ki (1920-2013), who fused western abstraction with Chinese ink styles in monumental ethereal floating landscapes titled only by their date — and the Frenchman Pierre Soulages, launching the "outrenoir" canvases, black depths produced by light reflected off thick painterly textures. Aged 99, Souages is still creating these today.

This quintet is gathered together to explore the lively,

innovative results when painters reassessed American abstraction through cross-cultural exchange, transatlantic and east-west. The show includes Francis's "Arceuil", the symphonic orange-blue painting that looks spontaneous but holds in tension energetic, pulsing marks and taut composition, last seen in the UK at Tate's exhibition *The New American Painting* in 1959.

Of particular interest also is the face-off between Riopelle, using palette knife and trowel on macho, robustly structured canvases in black, white and red whose meshed lines have a cartographic discipline — "L'heure feu follet", "Horizontal Black and White" — and Mitchell's calligraphic, fluid brushwork, sonorous hues and lyric sensibility in several impressive untitled works, consciously indebted to impressionism (Mitchell lived in Monet's Vetheuil.)

This is a welcome tribute to second-generation gestural abstraction: vibrant, original, authentically "un art autre" as the critic Michel Tapié defined the movement at the time.

levygorvy.com, to July 5



Sam Francis's 'Arceuil' (1956-58) — Sam Francis Foundation, California/DACS

Henry Moore: Nature and Inspiration

Houghton Hall, King's Lynn

There can be no better place in the world to show Moore's majestic sculptures, expressing a lifetime's thought about man's relationship with nature and the classical world, than the 450-acre grounds of this Palladian villa, with yews, ornamental hedges, rose gardens and roaming white fallow deer offsetting major bronze semi-abstractions, including "Large Reclining Figure", "The Arch", "Three Piece Sculpture: Vertebrae" and "Upright Motive".

houghtonhall.com

May 1-September 29

Anthony Caro

Annelly Juda Gallery, London;
Cliveden National Trust, Taplow

Anthony Caro, Moore's rebellious visionary pupil, took sculpture down from the plinth, added bright paint and industrial objects, and questioned assumptions about form, material and subject, yet now he is almost as unfashionable as Moore. Annelly Juda sets out to recover his dynamic charge

and fresh sculptural language; works range from the gnarled figurative "Cigarette Smoker" (1957) to the stainless steel and perspex "The Eye Knows" (2013) suggesting a futuristic city. Complementing London's show, 16 monumental outdoor pieces — "Scorched Flats", "Slow March" — are installed along Cliveden's Green Drive. annelyjudafineart.co.uk May 1-July 6; nationaltrust.org.uk to November 10

Don McCullin

Tate Britain, London

Vietnam, Biafra, Northern Ireland, Syria: we know the worst history of our own times through McCullin's stark photographs, monochrome but with velvety depths, published in newspapers since the 1960s. Truth-telling and courage — physical, and to turn horror into formally perfect, balanced compositions — make this photographer "accustomed to the dark" among the greatest of the postwar era. Final week. tate.org.uk, to May 6

Writing:

Making Your Mark

British Library, London

Hieroglyphs, medieval manuscripts, Japanese gold-laden calligraphy, Russian revolutionary typefaces, today's emojis: the story of the act of writing over 5,000 years. Rare exhibits include James Joyce's annotated "Ulysses", Mozart's musical notebooks and William Caxton's edition of "The Canterbury Tales". bl.uk, to August 27

Charles Avery

Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh

Charles Avery's skill and inventiveness as draughtsman and conceptual thinker enliven his long-running fictional city Onomatopoeia. Centrepiece here is a six-metre pole constructed from steel, blown glass, 24 volt electrics and an old shoe: tree, street lamp, temple. Fantastical drawings feature towers rising from the ocean, radicals arguing at The Union Cafe and ravenous beasts at the market. inglebygallery.com to July 13