

PERROTIN

Alain JACQUET, James ROSENQUIST

The Brooklyn Rail,

Alain Jacquet & James Rosenquist

December 2024

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Installation view: *Alain Jacquet & James Rosenquist*, Perrotin Gallery, New York, 2024. Courtesy Perrotin.

Let me say, to begin, that the whole issue of doughnuts, which may not seem connected at all to the space of a gallery, is indeed important to this exhibition. Indeed as if something sounding so trivial as a dance of the doughnuts, like Henri Matisse's dance, would be only to make fun. Let me say immediately also that the irony, and the enormously witty irony of Pop art has gravely, and not just ironically, to do with the intense elaboration of this exhibition and its objects, in all the senses of that word.

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James Rosenquist and his famous work with signage is closely related to Alain Jacquet in the world of Pop art, and among my favorite works of his is that startling bright yellow work of two hands—*Yellow Applause* of 1966—that seems to me to signify so very much about working together, the way these two artists are working together in this very exhibition: Rosenquist so well known, and Alain Jacquet far less so. But how wonderful it is for those of us who did not know Jacquet to find him here. We hope not to lose him.



James Rosenquist, *Yellow Applause*, 1966. Oil on mechanized sliding canvas panels, with recessed Formica panel, 60 x 74 inches. © 2024 James Rosenquist, Inc. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Courtesy the James Rosenquist Estate.

That Alain Jacquet should not have been gravely and seriously acknowledged everywhere as he should have been is all the more ironic, and irony is certainly a major part of this exhibition. James Rosenquist is, of course, far more well known, and that makes this doubling, thanks to the Kasmin gallery and the Perrotin gallery, all the more important for critics and viewers. Let me say another word about the viewer right now, because what so captivated me as I was going over these works was a very funny “Camouflage” (how I deeply enjoyed every one of the “Camouflages”!) of that celebrated canvas we’ve all always loved, *Bonjour Monsieur Courbet (Version rouge négatif)* (1999). What you see here looks like two hot dogs—perhaps just waiting for their mustard—which is only part of the sophistication of Alain Jacquet. He knows his mustard and shares it with us.

Do we love—and if not, we will have missed a good part of this exhibition’s point or meanings or interpretations—the play on Jacquet’s name, which is a game of backgammon, playing not just on the name, but on its colors and permutations. See the *Jeu de jacquet* of 1961. Now I haven’t even thought about backgammon for years, since I was a child, but in a sense, the delicately complicated sense of irony that pervades all this art can only be appreciated if one is willing to think again, as in the *Images d’Épinal* (1961–62), which are also in the show, and encounter them for the first time. Let me say, in fact, that encountering these doughnuts for the first time was like some sort of miracle for me. I’m a southerner, I love donuts, especially intricate doughnuts, and this exhibition gave me a jolt of childhood joy.



Alain Jacquet, *Duncan Donut II (Dark)*, 1989. Acrylic spray on canvas (robotic). 109 x 92 inches. ©Alain Jacquet / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York 2024. Courtesy the artist's estate and Perrotin. Photo: Charles

And this exhibition is one of those joyously invested turns of the mind, like a sort of backgammon we didn't know about and have re-encountered

and re-interpreted. Let's just think I have forgotten the cosmos, and just reduced everything to a doughnut. It seemed so gloriously a miracle to me that in these days, one can call on the cosmos by way of not just as far as Mars and Venus, but a cosmic donut, indeed a *Duncan Donut II (Dark)* (1989), as in my remembered "Dunkin Donut" (pp. 115-121). Let me interject here, since, as a southerner, I have not forgotten my roots, that the doughnuts I knew growing up were the most miraculous and collective experience I've ever had, and that I miss, right now in these times, greatly. Let me also say, again showing my reversion to childhood and the south, that I had not at all understood the *Hommage à Confucius* (2000), that enormous doughnut with a sausage bounced on top. As the introduction to the catalogue wisely points out, these are the female and male genitals of Mars and Venus... Now how in the world would I have known that, but it seems to signal the bullfighting tradition in southern France. Good Lord, as someone who lives sometimes in the Vaucluse, you would think I would have recognized that, but how joyous is it that such exhibitions as these and such brilliant catalogues as these show us things that we should have known and, gloriously, did not. Here's to catalogues if I may say.

Ah, I cannot finish this without saluting three magnificent "Camouflages," one being a rendering of Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (c. 1485) near a Shell's gasoline pump (p.35)! This is a prime example of Mec Art (mechanical art), as is *La Source* (p.64), with the nude walking straight our way, carrying her gigantic water bottle, the witty wordplay characteristic of Alan Jacquet. The other, Jacquet's play on/with the more than celebrated *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* (pp.44-45), in which the new figures (of course, go see!!) are looking at us. I love the re-celebration in all ironic evidence, of all that Jacquet handles with such complicated magnificence.