

# FOCUS FRANCE

AVANT LA LETTRE

Craig Garrett

PERHAPS MORE THAN any other country, France is culture. But for all the pride it takes in its creative and intellectual history, France's legacy has not always been an advantage to its artists, many of whom find the burden of this history difficult to shake. The past ten years, however, have witnessed a new willingness to rethink received notions and a courage to take the kinds of risks that are helping place France back in the vanguard of contemporary art.

This special issue of *Flash Art International* presents a snapshot of a country at a creative crossroads. In addition to feature-length interviews with Philippe Parreno, Thomas Hirschhorn, and Mathieu Briand, as well as a discussion with philosopher Clément Rosset, the survey below assembles 13 of the top figures in France's contemporary art scene, each of them representing one element in a dynamic new approach to contemporary art. Whether rethinking the role of the curator, reconsidering the status of the art object in the wider social field, or reevaluating opportunities for private support of the arts, these individuals are shaping the future of art, not only in France, but in the world at large.

—Craig Garrett



From left: Francois Piron. Grégoire Maisonneuve

## GRÉGOIRE MAISONNEUVE

*Grégoire Maisonneuve was the director of Galerie Chantal Crousel from 1999 to 2000. In 2002 he founded Galerie Maisonneuve, which is located in Paris' XXème arrondissement.*

*How did your experience in Beaubourg affect your decision to set up in this part of Paris?*

Considering places like London or New York where galleries are spread over the city, Paris has very specific districts for contemporary art spaces (the Marais, rue Louise Weiss). I preferred to favor the exhibition space rather than the central area, counting on the program of the gallery to attract collectors and the public. And it works.

*What is French contemporary art's greatest strength?*

In some way, to be independent of a too-strong art market logic — which is probably also its weakness.