

Caroline Bourgeois

The Prize is starting, with this fourth edition, to gain renown and the different people chairing it each year reflect the undertaking that the Prize represents.

It was created in the memory of an exceptional man, Jean-François Prat, who was at the head of one of the leading corporate law firms in Paris. I personally did not know Jean-François Prat very well, but he had, rightfully so, a reputation for having very high standards both in his legal work and in his approach as an art collector. His consistent commitment to pass on his passions has meant that the firm has continued to flourish.

His passion for contemporary art that he shared with his wife Marie-Aline Prat, exceeded that which can be seen, say more generally, in certain art collectors. The collection even spread to the firm's office walls and the firm continues today to live in the same spirit. It is now today the whole firm which elects the winner of the Prize. I would also like to praise the quality of this collection which is due to its singularity, unswayed by fashions, and conceived with an historic perspective, as works which are still on the walls of their flat have lived there for more than 40 years while others have just recently taken up residence.

The passion of Jean-François and Marie-Aline Prat is also reflected in their friendships and relations, with not only very young artists as well as but also established renowned art historians. I was struck, when I met Marie-Aline, by her concern for relaying continuity, by her fervour, her passion, her efforts to carry this Prize in order to give visibility to a young artist. All of this shows definite generosity, curiosity and high standards. This Prize reflects all of these qualities. It reveals young artists dedicated to painting, a medium which is of course historical but also difficult to apprehend.

The winners of the previous editions reflect these high standards and curiosity for artists from all parts of the world: in 2012 Farah Atassi, of dual Belgian and Syrian nationality, who is now increasingly well known; in 2013 Matt Saunders, an American artist and Zander Blom in 2014, from South Africa.

This year, three artists, all as original as each other, who explore the multiple complexities of pictorial practice: the question of light, optical phenomena and effects of movement; the question of space and of surface; the urgency of the representation; colour; the relationship to reality: Philippe Decrauzat, a Swiss artist represented by the Praz-Delavallade gallery; Maude Maris, a young French artist represented by the Isabelle Gounod gallery; and Raphaëlle Ricol, a young French artist, who has created her universe through her own effort and hard work, and who does not yet really have a representative.

Whoever the winner may be, the Prize's spirit, the selection of the artists by a committee of art experts, the choice of the winning artist being made by the partners of the firm: everything in this enterprise reflects a deep curiosity, a desire to share, a remarkable

opening towards "art for all". All this makes up the beating heart of the Jean-François Prat Prize.

Caroline Bourgeois is chief curator of the Pinault Collection. Swiss born, psychoanalysis graduated, she was co-director at the Jennifer Flay gallery, independent curator, then chief curator of the Plateau-FRAC Île de France & of TRAM contemporary art institutions network of the greater Paris area. She implemented the video collection of François Pinault, before joining his Foundation to curate the exhibitions at Palazzo Grassi, Punta della Dogana (Venezia) and at large.