



Gaston Chaissec, Ohne Titel, ca. 1960 © Bildrecht, Wien 2017, Fonds de l'Abbaye d'Auberive

**PRESS RELEASE:**

**existence.!**

**humans in the jean-claude volot collection**

**PRESS TOUR:**

**Thursday, 25 January 2018, 2:00 pm**

**EXHIBITION OPENING: Thursday, 25 January 2018, 7:00 pm**

**DURATION:**

**26. Jänner – 7. Oktober 2018**

## existence.! humans in the jean-claude volot collection

For the first time in Austria: Art Brut from the Jean-Claude Volot Collection

*museum gugging presents the Jean-Claude Volot Collection. Volot is one of today's most unconventional art collectors. He is fascinated by the existential questions of human life: fate, constraints and suffering, horror and madness, the power of creativity, and love. His collection juxtaposes Art Brut with works of famous artists and yet to be rediscovered classics such as Karel Appel, Gaston Chaissac, Hans Bellmer, or Louise Giamari. This collection can be seen in Austria for the first time.*

Jean-Claude Volot has been collecting art for three decades. In the selection of his works he ignored the prevailing canon of irrefutable aesthetic qualities which has been stipulated by the purchasing decisions of French museums and art institutions. Volot took and takes the freedom in the compilation of the works that these institutions have denied themselves. Jean-Claude Volot stockpiled all of these artworks in his own monastery, Auberive Abbey, in a secluded forest in Haute Marne. Thousands of paintings, objects, and sculptures are stored behind century-old walls, and the public should not be deprived from them, for they can provide us with insights into facets of our own existence and possibly also our souls – if we let them.





Fabian Cerredo, Minotaurus bietet seiner Schönen sein Herz an, 2003 © Bildrecht, Wien 2017, Fonds de l'Abbaye d'Auberive

### **An obsessive collector**

“My purchases are a cross-section through the artistic movements of our time: Art Brut, Expressionism, Street Art, Art Singulier, Surrealism, Pop Art... The whole collection poses questions about humans – their fates, their constraints and suffering, their horror, their madness, their creative power, and their love. If you want to characterise it all (the paintings, drawings, sculptures, videos) with one word, then the word “human” comes to mind.” (Jean-Claude Volot)

Jean-Claude Volot has selected a significant number of works by renowned artists, some recently deceased and others still living, such as Hans Bellmer, Gaston Chaissac, Karl Appel, and others. But he is also interested in other, more surprising objects – for instance, Christian objects made by craftspeople or artists in Africa during colonial times. Just how many works Volot has collected he himself likely cannot say. Diversity is characteristic of his “gallery”.

**Art Brut – A category for Jean-Claude Volot?**

Two categories of artists can be distinguished in his collection: on the one hand, those who conform with the customs of the art market; on the other, those artists who reside on the fringes of the established art world. But the Volot Collection disregards such categorisations. All works in his collection are on the same level. Hence, any form of hierarchical relation between them is suspended. Volot doesn't like pigeonholes – for him it is no problem to hang an Aloïse beside Matisse and La Chaise or Wölfli beside Klee, for example. In his own way, this is exactly what Volot does with “his” artists. The collection primarily consists of works for which there is well-established terminology, but they seem to subvert it, as if it didn't exist. They refer to a perception of artistic creativity that perplexes because their structure is not prescribed by the classifications that prevailed in France in the past decades and were adopted by most cultural institutions there. This is one main reason to have a closer look at the collection: because it has evolved – and perhaps without the knowledge of its creator – absolutely outside of the norms.

[Based on the catalogue text by Philippe Dagen, “Portrait von Jean-Claude Volot,” in *Esprit Singulier. Fonds de l'Abbaye d'Auberive*. (Paris: Flammarion, 2016).

**Images:**

<https://celum.noeku.at/pindownload/login.do?pin=ZY57B>

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