



# The Myth of Nouveau Réalisme: Art and the Performative in Postwar France

*Kaira M. Cabañas*

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On October 27, 1960, art critic Pierre Restany named a group of Paris-based artists the “Nouveaux Réalistes” (New Realists) in a founding declaration that stated, “The New Realists recognize their collective singularity. New Realism = new perceptual approaches of the real.” Besides Restany, this group included Arman, François Dufrêne, Raymond Hains, Yves Klein, Martial Raysse, Daniel Spoerri, Jean Tinguely, and Jacques Villeglé. Their work incorporated consumer objects and new media in response to the postwar period’s painterly modes and its burgeoning consumer and industrial society. However, they did not share a common avant-garde strategy.

*The Myth of Nouveau Réalisme* is a critical reassessment of this important neo-avant-garde movement. Kaira M. Cabañas offers an interdisciplinary account of their work and challenges the ideas of Restany, who mandated a “direct appropriation of the real.” Cabañas posits that, for the Nouveaux Réalistes, realism engaged performative practices to produce alternative social meanings.

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