

## Jean Fautrier

(Paris, 1898– Chatenay-Malabry, 1964)

Two works by Fautrier, *Angles*, 1958, and *Neon*, 1963, were acquired by the CRT Foundation along with other works by international artists, to establish a dialogue with the extensive series of Italian paintings, acquired earlier, that represent a selection of the most significant examples of abstract painting from the early 1950s to the early 1960s.

A sequence of photographs of Fautrier at his worktable, published in Italy in 1960, the year he received official recognition at the Venice Biennale, explain more convincingly than words the difference between his pictorial attitude and that of more effusive *Art Informel*. His process is regulated, orderly, and anticipates a sequence of precise phases: after the preparation of the paper applied to canvas, the artist begins by drawing, then adds various materials, and concludes with a gesture of the brush to confirm the initial drawing, and with it an even more controlled, vaguely surgical, gesture of a metal stick with which he carves subtle furrows into the body of the still wet surface.

The two canvases in the collection belong to the artist's final period of pictorial research, which he began around 1955, when the perimeter of the work, activated by a dense impasto that marks the material core of his works, is enhanced by various square and geometric shapes on which the artist draws not the closed form that is present in the *Otages (Hostages)* series, but lines and sticks, freely arranged and sometimes crossed. It might seem possible to interpret these results as truly abstract art, but that would be a mistake. What the artist has achieved, instead, can be summarized by the comments of Palma Bucarelli, written almost at the conclusion of her extensive essay on the artist: "his virtuosity is a virtuosity overturned, that retraces in reverse, rapidly, all the stages of complication to attain simplicity." Interpreting this work as simply abstract would misrepresent the artist's entire poetics. In 1957, the year when many of these works were created, Fautrier unequivocally wrote, "While there were one or two fortunate and authentic strokes of inspiration, those pretentious entertainments, supported by an entire literature as obscure as it is useless, which are supposedly "informel," and which necessarily reject absolutely every trace of reality, end up giving us only some variations of material, of marbled papers, of stucco, in other words surfaces devoid of all imagination, and finally mutually imitate one another by rather faithfully recopying those same two successes. Reality must live on in the work, it is the raw material, "the living work" that lies beneath the form, that supports it and moves it." (Fautrier, Jean, "À chacun sa réalité," *XXe Siècle*, June, 1957). (EV)