



Mat Collishaw, *KuadroXX*, 2002, photograph, glass, acrylic, steel, light and filing. Photo: Marc Donatje. Courtesy: Galerie Coenig, Paris

## in a country that is almost Soviet in its State dominance, the Prix Marcel Duchamp could be a sign of change on the French scene

each cleverly renewing their stable of international big names with some of the hottest new talent. On the home front, Melik Ohanian, with his science and astronomy-related installations, and video artist Azri Sala are particularly worth watching out for at Chantal Coussel. But there are also some energetic new spaces emerging. The Cosmic Galerie opened in a vast *hôtel particulier* in rue de Turenne with bankable names Mat Collishaw and Vanessa Beecroft. Galerie Franck, which has just moved to rue St-Gilles, presented an impressive wall installation by Cécile Bart in April. Then there are the more radical repositions of Maisonneuve, strategically placed outside galleryland in the youthful bar territory of *Ménilmontant*. Maisonneuve has already presented Italian artist *danses*, Claudia Tiozzi, the art/design of Alexandre Périgot and the Lovehotel of Cuban artist Jota Castro, during which the gallery was converted into a Japanese-style love hotel and available to rent by the night.

In a country that is almost Soviet in its State dominance, the Prix Marcel Duchamp, initiated in 2001 by the ADIAF, an association of French collectors, to draw attention to art 'made in France', could be a sign of

change on the French scene, a private-public collaboration that is an unusual case of collectors', rather than institutional, initiative. While often compared to the Turner Prize, rather than exhibiting all the shortlisted artists, the award finances the creation of an exhibition showcasing the winner at the Pompidou. Having gone through the obvious thirty-something generation of artists in the first two years - Thomas Hirschhorn winning in 2001 and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster in 2002 - this year has been the Duchamp's coming of age, with a more diverse and less obvious shortlist, and the prize going to young bricoleur Mathieu Mercier. His show in December should be a real revelation and sign of a true rejuvenation. As Gilles Fuchs, president of ADIAF says, 'the evolution is that we are searching more and more for artists who have a potential but who don't yet have a huge career behind them. If the jury chose Gonzalez-Foerster over Prize last year, Mercier over Claude Lévêque this year, we are trying not to award it to artists who are too established but to be a springboard for young artists.'

If the Prix Duchamp is intended to raise the profile of French art, it is