



Fred Klein, Marie Raymond, Yves Klein and Rotraut Uecker

Yves Klein

and His Artist Family: Fred, Marie and Rotraut

Edited by

Tijs Visser

Contributions by

Robert Fleck

Michèle Gazier

Colin Huizing

Bianca Stigter

Victor Vanoosten

Yves Klein and His Artist Family: Fred, Marie, and Rotraut



Fred Klein, *Maternité* (featuring Marie Raymond and baby Yves), 1929, oil on canvas, 73×54 cm. Private collection.

Yves Klein (1928–1962) is one of the most groundbreaking artists of the twentieth century. Marked by charisma and a daring vision, his brief but electrifying artistic career evoked both admiration and controversy. His radical approach, which incorporated pure natural elements such as pigment, gold leaf, bodies, fire, and water, challenged conventional boundaries, resulting in breathtakingly beautiful and conceptually audacious works. His pioneering use of International Klein Blue (IKB), a colour whose unique application process he famously developed, symbolised his desire to transcend the material world and reach a realm of pure energy and immateriality. Today, his iconic monochrome paintings, infused with an almost otherworldly glow, continue to captivate audiences in the world's most prestigious museums. His legacy is reinforced by an ever-growing body of publications in numerous languages, each offering new interpretations of his work.

However, one crucial aspect of his artistic journey has largely remained unexplored: the profound connection between Klein's work and that of his parents, who were also accomplished artists. Despite a retrospective in Amsterdam at the Van Gogh Museum in 1978, his father, Fred Klein, has been largely forgotten, and yet he was a key figure in pioneering the use of expressive colour, an element that Yves would later refine into his own groundbreaking artistic language. Fred was completely dismissive, however, of modernist

and geometric movements. He openly expressed his aversion to his son's work, believing it bore too many similarities to that of his own Parisian neighbour, Piet Mondrian. This exhibition and book shed new light on the complex artistic dialogue between father and son, revealing how they challenged, mirrored, and ultimately complemented each other in previously unrecognised ways.

While Yves distanced himself from his father, he shared a deep artistic and intellectual kinship with his mother, Marie Raymond. A celebrated painter, critic, and intellectual, she quickly built an impressive career, culminating in a major solo exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1956. She was more than just a visual artist; she played a crucial role in shaping post-war abstract art through her radiant, lyrical compositions and her influence on artistic discourse. As a prominent writer for the Dutch magazine *Kroniek van Kunst en Cultuur* (Chronicle of Art and Culture), she documented the evolving Parisian art scene, establishing herself as one of the most significant chroniclers of contemporary art. Her discussion salons in Paris, frequented by artists, philosophers, and museum directors, became a hub for avant-garde exchange. This network of creative minds and ideas had a lasting impact on her son Yves, shaping his conceptual approach to art.

This publication is being released on the occasion of the exhibition *Yves Klein and His Artist Family: Fred, Marie*

and *Rotraut* at the Stedelijk Museum Schiedam.

Yves Klein's wife, *Rotraut*, is another key figure who very much deserves to be acknowledged as this exhibition and its accompanying publication on such an outstanding family of artists reach fruition. More than just a muse, *Rotraut* is an exceptional artist in her own right and the devoted guardian of the Klein family's artistic legacy. Through her stewardship, the creative heritage of Fred, Marie and Yves continues to endure and receive recognition.

The fact that this exhibition is being held in Schiedam, a city where both Fred and Marie Klein exhibited, adds another layer of significance to this long-overdue exploration of an extraordinary artistic dynasty, but there are a number of other reasons for holding an exhibition in the Netherlands.

Fred Klein (1898–1990) was born in Bandung, grew up in the Dutch city of Apeldoorn, and attended the Handels-school (Business School) in Rotterdam before leaving for Paris. He maintained strong ties with the Netherlands, however, returning frequently to draw and paint at the artists' residence *De Pauwhof* in Wassenaar. His first major exhibition, which received glowing reviews, took place at the Stedelijk Museum Schiedam. Fred's colourful and dynamic compositions resonated with Dutch art collectors and institutions, securing his place within the country's artistic lineage.

Marie Raymond (1908–1988), who was born in France but also held a Dutch passport, played a crucial role in shaping the artistic discourse between France and the Netherlands. As a regular contributor to the *Kroniek van Kunst en Cultuur*, she reported on Parisian art movements and acted as a bridge between the two nations' cultural spheres. Her salons were attended by Dutch artists and museum directors eager to engage with the avant-garde developments taking place in Paris. Her very first solo exhibition was held in The Hague in *Kunstzaal Liernur*, and her artistic reputation culminated in a major retrospective at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. The Stedelijk Museum in Schiedam also gave special recognition to her work, cementing her enduring influence on Dutch and European modernism.

And Yves? Even before deciding to pursue a career as an artist, he frequently visited the Netherlands, often alone or with his parents. It was during these formative visits that he encountered the works of Van Gogh and Vermeer at either the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam or the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo. These experiences shaped his artistic sensibilities. Yves later competed in judo tournaments in Utrecht, where he famously fought – but lost – against later world and Olympic champion Anton Geesink. His engagement with judo – both as a martial art and a philosophy – would go on to influence his art, particularly his ideas about the body, movement, and

the void. This is evident not only in his own writings, but also in the sole interview he ever gave to a journalist, for the Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Handelsblad*, which was published shortly before his death. Tragically, Yves Klein was never able to oversee his first retrospective exhibition 1965 in person. In accordance with his wishes, it was held posthumously at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

The impetus to study the Klein family of artists arose when questions were raised about the authenticity of an unusual painting that was possibly the work of Yves, but signed only as “Klein”. What followed was an astonishing revelation: Fred Klein's works were widely collected at the time by Dutch collectors. Even more surprisingly, major museums in Amsterdam, Utrecht, and Schiedam were found to house works by all three Kleins – Fred, Yves, and Marie – in their permanent collections. Furthermore, institutions such as the Dutch National Bank and the government had also acquired their works, and the RKD (Netherlands Institute for Art History) contained an extensive archive on Fred Klein. And yet, until now, this rich legacy has remained largely unexamined.

Thanks to years of dedicated research by the team of the 0-INSTITUTE, in collaboration with the Yves Klein Archives in Paris and with co-curator of the exhibition Colin Huizing, this publication finally offers comprehensive, unprecedented insight

into the artistic legacy of the Klein family in the Netherlands.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to *Rotraut Klein-Moquay*, *Daniel Moquay*, *Anna and Yves Amu Klein*, *François Roulin*, *Hélène Guenin*, and everyone who contributed to bringing this remarkable artistic story to light.

None of this would have been possible without the financial support of the Municipality of Schiedam, the Blockbusterfonds, Fonds Schiedam Vlaardingen e.o., Mondriaan Fonds, Turing Foundation, De Groot Fonds, and Zabawas. We are deeply grateful to all of them for their support.

Tijs Visser, 0-INSTITUTE
Anne de Haij, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam



- 12 **The Klein-Raymond Family**
Robert Fleck
- 20 **Chronology**
Tijs Visser & Colin Huizing
- 32 **Fred Klein – A Timeless Painter**
Colin Huizing
- 44 **Dutch Painters Living Abroad: Fred Klein**
G. Scheltema
- 48 **The Non-Figurative Art of Marie Raymond**
Piet Kraus
- 52 **Marie Raymond as an Art Critic**
Viktor Vanoosten
- 57 **Highlighted Artworks**
Tijs Visser
- 100 **Yves Klein in the Netherlands**
Tijs Visser
- 112 **Yves Klein – Painter of the Absolute**
Gerard W. Weber
- 116 **Marie Raymond and the Posthumous Presence of Yves Klein**
Robert Fleck
- 122 **Rotraut – The Theft of Sensibility**
Editorial Staff *Algemeen Handelsblad*
- 126 **Rotraut – The Yves Klein Years and Beyond**
Michèle Gazier
- 132 **Yves Klein – Over the Top**
Bianca Stigter

The Klein-Raymond Family (1928–1955)

Robert Fleck



Yves Klein, Fred Klein and Marie Raymond, Cagnes-sur-Mer, circa 1934.

Mr. and Mrs. F. Klein are delighted to announce the birth of their son, Yves. Nice, April 28, 1928. 2, rue François-de-Paule.¹

Marie Raymond and Fred Klein were married in Nice on 26 October 1926. Barely two years later, their son Yves was born. After spending some time in Paris to ensure the best possible childbirth conditions, the couple returned to Nice.

Born to a German father and a Dutch mother in Java in 1898, Fred Klein was ten years older than Marie Raymond. After their wedding, he brought the young fine-arts student from Nice to Paris, where they lived in a studio on the Rue du Départ. The studio was located on the site of the newly built Tour Montparnasse, in the same building that Mondrian also occupied.

They were surrounded by friends and a whole community of local and foreign artists who would gather together at cafés like La Coupole and Le Dôme. It was much like one big family where similarly minded artists got together to engage in endless conversations.

The two years preceding Yves' birth were a time of complete immersion in the modernist world of Montparnasse. Despite her initial struggles to understand his abstract style, the company of Piet Mondrian had a profound influence on Raymond's artistic outlook – an influence that would also later help to shape her son's development.

It was in this vibrant environment that Raymond had painted her first independent works, pursuing her lifelong dream of becoming an artist – a dream that had begun in Nice and Cagnes-sur-Mer when she first met Fred Klein in 1925.

Before Yves' birth, the Kleins were deeply immersed in the lively art scene of Montparnasse. They mingled with representational and neoclassical artists, as well as leading abstractionists. Raymond would not again experience such a period of artistic vitality and seamless integration in the modernist art world before the Liberation of Paris in 1944.

The couple's financial situation led to them making frequent trips between Paris and the French Riviera, which influenced Raymond's own artistic journey and helped establish her son in Parisian artistic circles.

Fred Klein had arrived in the Netherlands at the age of six. He later studied business at the Rotterdam School of Economics, before deciding to pursue a career in art. Like many young foreign artists who were drawn to the artistic capital of the world, he moved to Paris to study under André Lhote at his private art school in the Passage d'Odessa.

By the time Yves was born, Fred Klein had participated in only one exhibition, which was held at the Galerie d'Art Français in Amsterdam in 1926. This was not unusual for young artists of the era, who often lived on the fringes of the official art world and carved out their own creative paths.



Fred Klein and Yves, Fontenay-aux-Roses, 1931.



Marie Raymond and Yves, Fontenay-aux-Roses, 1931.

Loup. Attending boarding school in Nice a little later would prove an eye-opening experience, as it allowed her to mingle with students of various nationalities. She received painting lessons from the French artist Alexandre Stoppelaëre in Cagnes-sur-Mer, which was to have a lasting influence on her later development. Before meeting Fred Klein, Marie had never travelled beyond the South of France.

It was in Paris, however, that Raymond pursued her artistic training. Drawn to modernism in her early twenties, she followed the path of many young artists of her time by attending various private art schools. She could not accurately be described as self-taught because, during the interwar period, creativity and advanced artistic techniques were primarily being cultivated in the independent schools and studios established by the artistic community and by modernist pioneers.

According to Raymond, the best “schooling” came from spending time with renowned artists of the era.² Financial restraints meant the couple were frequently forced to relocate, yet they continued to expand their artistic network. Once Yves Klein turned two years old, they moved back to Paris from 1930 to 1931, to live on the outskirts of Montparnasse in a Constructivist-style building designed by Le Corbusier.

Then forty-eight years old, Auguste Herbin had a studio next door. In February of 1931, Herbin co-founded the association Abstraction-Création with another Flemish

expatriate, Georges Vantongerloo, one of the leading figures of non-figurative art in 1930s Paris. Ironically, decades later in his role as vice-president of the *Salon des Réalités Nouvelles* of 1955, Herbin would reject a monochrome painting that Yves Klein had submitted.

In 1931, the Klein family moved to Fontenay-aux-Roses, on the outskirts of Paris. They settled in an old millstone house that had previously been occupied by another Dutch artist, Charles Eyck. Thirty years later, this town would become the setting for one of Yves Klein’s most spectacular artistic experiments: *Leap Into the Void*.

By the age of ten, Yves was an energetic and hyperactive child who was frequently uprooted from school as his parents moved around. Jacques Villon also occasionally hosted gatherings at his home, which Yves greatly enjoyed. Raymond later wrote in her memoirs, “What better schooling could one imagine for both myself and young Yves?”³

Due to the lack of sales of their artwork, Fred and Marie Klein lived from day to day, often relying on family support. In 1932, in an attempt to provide for her family, Marie enrolled in a correspondence course to become a drawing teacher. This plan fell through, however, when – determined not to lose touch with the artistic world – they took the decision to return to Paris.

At this stage, Fred Klein was the only member of the family to achieve a so to say professional level as an artist. He exhibited occasionally in various salons and art

galleries in Paris, and around this same period, he also gained recognition in the Netherlands, exhibiting almost annually at the Galerie Buffa in Amsterdam – except for during the years of World War II.

The 1930s were a period of great learning for Raymond. However, it was during the war years that her artistic vision truly took shape. This period was crucial to the development of her ideas and artwork, leading her toward an abstract and non-figurative approach.

One particularly significant encounter during this time was with Nicolas de Staël, the son of Russian exiles, and his partner, the painter Jeannine Guillou. Raymond met the couple on the beach in Nice while walking with her young son, Yves. In her unpublished memoirs, she recalled: “we often went to the beach with our children to sketch”.⁵ At that time, de Staël’s work was representational; he worked with live models or painted *en plein air*.

As a teenager, Yves Klein observed his mother and de Staël drawing and experienced first-hand the artistic debate between representational and abstract art. Without over-interpreting, it is safe to say that he was deeply familiar with the life of an artist from a young age. He witnessed the financial struggles of bohemian artists in the 1930s, their relentless efforts to survive, and the emotional and creative challenges they faced.

This early exposure to the artistic world was decisive in shaping Yves Klein’s revolutionary approach. The role



Yves Klein at the age of ten in Cagnes-sur-Mer, 1938.

though life of course became increasingly precarious. Eventually, they had to sell their home in Cagnes-sur-Mer. They moved into more modest accommodation, and the strain of these hardships took a toll on Fred and Marie's relationship.

Up until this point, the sale of Fred's artwork had partially helped to support the family. However, as a Dutch immigrant living in Vichy-controlled France, his legal and financial status became increasingly vulnerable. Raymond took on the responsibility of providing for the family, shifting the dynamics of the household.

Despite these challenges, the Kleins remained engaged in the artistic life of southern France, joining an informal group of modernist painters from 1939 to 1943. This close-knit artistic community would later be recognised as a key laboratory for the new painting concepts that would emerge after the Liberation.

In June 1943, Fred and Marie Klein returned to their apartment on the Rue d'Assas in Paris, this time for good. The following year, Yves enrolled in a civil-engineering school to prepare for his final secondary-school exams. As was the case before the war, Fred remained the only one enjoying a certain level of recognition, while Marie's work remained largely unknown due to a lack of exhibitions.

One thing had changed, however. The Liberation of Paris in August 1944 marked the end of German censorship and brought newfound freedom to painting. Up until 1939, Marie had painted

portraits and landscapes, but now her work began to transition to abstract, non-geometric painting. She later wrote: "As soon as Yves left for school, I began to work. I found new inspiration." In less than a year, she began practicing her own form of abstract art.⁶

The *Salon des Surindépendants* of 1945 marked a turning point. It was the only salon without a jury and thus provided an opportunity for relatively unknown artists. It was the first time she had publicly exhibited her work under her maiden name. She feared that her abstract paintings might affect the public perception of her husband Fred Klein's representational work. This decision to separate their names reflected Marie's desire to establish her independent artistic identity and perhaps signalled a growing discord within their marriage.

The art critic Charles Estienne introduced Denise René to five artists at the *Salon des Surindépendants*, including Marie, whom she planned to feature in her exhibitions at the gallery. The exhibition *Abstract Painting* also featured works by Jean Dewasne, Jean Deyrolle, Hans Hartung, and Gérard Schneider. Marie Raymond was the only female painter in the group.

Within months, she became one of the major artistic discoveries of the moment. Her paintings attracted significant interest, and critics compared her work to that of Nicolas de Staël and the gestural artist Hans Hartung.



Marie Raymond in her studio in Paris, 1948. Photo by Jo Bokma, collection of the Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam.



Fred Klein in his studio in Paris, 1948. Photo by Jo Bokma, collection of the Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam.



Christmas dinner with Fred Klein, Marie Raymond, Yves Klein and friends, including Colette and Pierre Soulages. The photo was taken by Hans Hartung in 1948.

They described her as embodying a “poetic” approach to non-geometric abstract art. She was the only female painter to experience such a rapid rise in France in the immediate post-war period.

Marie continued to paint at home, while the “professional” artist Fred enjoyed the luxury of working in his studio, an arrangement that had a profound effect on their relationship.

From 1946 onwards, Marie wrote a regular column for the Dutch magazine *Kroniek voor Kunst en Cultuur* (Chronicle of Art and Culture) establishing herself as a key ambassador for Parisian artistic news in

the Netherlands. She followed gallery openings, artist groups, and museum exhibitions more closely than anyone else at the time.

The family’s apartment on the Rue d’Assas became a gathering place for abstract and post-abstract artists. Raymond’s Monday evening gatherings arose from practical necessity: her growing popularity and frequent requests for studio visits, combined with her household responsibilities, made it easier to consolidate all meetings into a single weekly event.

Iris Clert and Colette Allendy were among the many gallery owners and inter-

mediaries who attended, along with collectors, including Raymond’s primary investor Gildas Fardel. Also present at these gatherings were figures like Nina Kandinsky, various museum directors passing through Paris, such as Willem Sandberg and Edy de Wilde, the directors of major Dutch museums, and scientists from both France and abroad. The younger artists in attendance were also familiar with Raymond’s son.

After travelling extensively abroad, Yves Klein decided to leave France in order to study and train in judo in Japan. He eventually earned a fourth-dan black belt from the prestigious Kodokan Judo Institute in Tokyo, making him the most highly awarded European judoka. In November 1953, Klein organised an exhibition of his parents’ work at the Bridgestone Gallery in Tokyo.

Upon returning to France, Yves Klein published his innovative book *Les Fondements du Judo* (The Foundations of Judo). However, the French Judo Federation refused to recognise the black belt he had received in Japan. In response, he left for Spain to coach the national team, as the federation had offered him the position. Upon returning to Paris in 1955, he opened his own judo school in a legendary location: the former studio of Fernand Léger.

Marie Raymond and Fred Klein were envied for their positions in the art world. They were actively involved in artistic debates and exhibitions in France and the Netherlands.

Their twenty-six-year-old son, Yves Klein, was now well acquainted with the emerging artists who regularly attended Marie Raymond’s Monday evening gatherings. Since his time in Japan, however, Yves had become a dedicated athlete, training daily and living entirely for sport.

Despite his passion and talent for judo, he became frustrated by his inability to participate in national and international competitions and so decided to devote himself to the visual arts.

- 1 The announcement of Yves Klein’s birth, Yves Klein Archives, Paris.
- 2 Marie Raymond, *Notre vie* (Our Life), an unpublished manuscript, Yves Klein Archive, Paris.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 “Judgement of decoration projects, painting and sculpture in the Alpes-Maritimes and Var Pavilion”, in *L’Eclairer*, Nice, 7 November 1936, Yves Klein Archives, Paris.
- 5 Marie Raymond, *Notre vie* (Our Life).
- 6 Ibid.

Chronology (1898–1990)



Cagnes, 'City of Painters', where Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Kees van Dongen lived.



The wedding of Fred Klein and Marie Raymond, 1926.

- 1898 Friedrich Franz Albert 'Frits' Klein is born in Bandung, Indonesia on 8 April, to a German father and a Dutch mother. His father dies six days before his birth.
- 1905 Fred moves to the Netherlands and lives with friends of his parents in Apeldoorn. There, he grows up in a culturally rich environment and develops an interest in art and architecture.
- 1908 Marie Raymond is born on 4 May in La Colle-sur-Loup to a pharmacist from Nice and his wife.
- 1916 After the death of her second husband, Fred's mother also moves to the Netherlands. He studies at the Handels-Hoogeschool (Business School) in Rotterdam, but is more interested in drawing.
- 1920 With his mother's support, Fred moves to Paris to study art and takes painting classes with the French artist André Lhote. He finds a studio in a house on the famous Rue du Départ, where Conrad Kickert and Piet Mondrian also have studios. In Paris, he is known as 'Fred' because 'Frits' sounds too German.



Marie Raymond and baby Yves (*Maternity*), painted by Fred Klein, 1929.



Marie Raymond with Yves in the dunes on the Dutch coast, 1931.

1925 Fred buys an old ruin in Cagnes-sur-Mer, a village on the Côte d'Azur frequented by renowned artists, and he converts it into a house and studio.

Fred and Marie Raymond meet, and they marry the following year.

1926 Fred has his first solo exhibition at the Galerie d'Art Français in Amsterdam.

Fred and Marie move back to Paris and settle at 26 Rue du Départ in Montparnasse.

1928 Yves Klein, the son of Fred and Marie, is born in Nice on 28 April.

1930 The Klein family move into an apartment in Maison Planeix in Paris, designed by Le Corbusier.

Fred holds his first solo exhibition at the Galerie d'Art Français in Amsterdam.

1931 The Klein family move to the outskirts of Paris and live alternately in Paris and Cagnes-sur-Mer.

The Dutch collector Piet Boendermaker, a patron of the Bergen school, purchases nineteen paintings by Fred.



Yves Klein in front of the Klein family home in Hauts de Cagnes, 1933.



Paris gallery exhibition reviews by Marie Raymond, *Kroniek van Hedendaagse Kunst en Cultuur*, 1948.

1934 Fred designs the poster, costumes, and set for the operetta *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss at Amsterdam's Stadsschouwburg.

1936 Marie takes lessons at the École des Arts Décoratifs in Nice.

1937 Marie and Fred are commissioned to produce a mural for the pavilion of the Alpes-Maritimes in the Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne in Paris.

1938 Rotraut Uecker, sister of the German artist Günther Uecker, is born on 27 November in Rerik, Germany.

1939 Fred's work is included in the exhibition *Onze Kunst van Heden* (Our Art of Today) at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, where the state acquires one of his works.

Marie begins writing reports on the Parisian art world for the Dutch art and culture magazine, *Kroniek van Hedendaagse Kunst en Cultuur*.

1945 Marie exhibits work under her maiden name for the first time during the *Salon des Surindépendants* in Paris.