

GALERIE CATHERINE PUTMAN

Jean Messagier

Campagnols d'hiver

Années 50-60

20 mars - 12 mai 2021



Jean Messagier *Campagnols d'hiver*, 1964 | pastel on paper | 75 x 108 cm

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You have to break up forms to allow light to reach them all, to kill the surface to be painted while respecting it.

Jean Messagier, Journal, 1956

Galerie Catherine Putman has pleasure in organising a new exhibition of works by Jean Messagier. The previous one—held in 2018—was centred on the truculent 1970s and 80s, spray paints, fluorescent effects, «gels», etc. The present exhibition goes further back in time, with works dating from the 1950s and 60s: watercolours, monotypes, drawings and engravings.

Jean Messagier (1920-1999) did a large body of protean and varied work in which several periods can be observed—with a range of different styles that has been disturbing for some people—but always centred on nature, life and poetry. It displays ceaseless movement and metamorphosis.

The artist started painting, drawing, engraving and exhibiting in the mid-1940s. At the beginning of the 1950s he installed his studio and his family in Colombier-Fontaine in the Doubs département, while exhibiting more and more in Paris and abroad. He developed painting that had structure but blurred contours, landscape painting but without a convention. The untitled watercolour in greens and yellows and dated 1955 illustrates this search for light with no shadows as the atmosphere. Messagier talked of the «search for weightlessness». Seasons, valleys, rivers and hills are the themes of the geological, breathing nature in which he moved and sought to pass on through art.

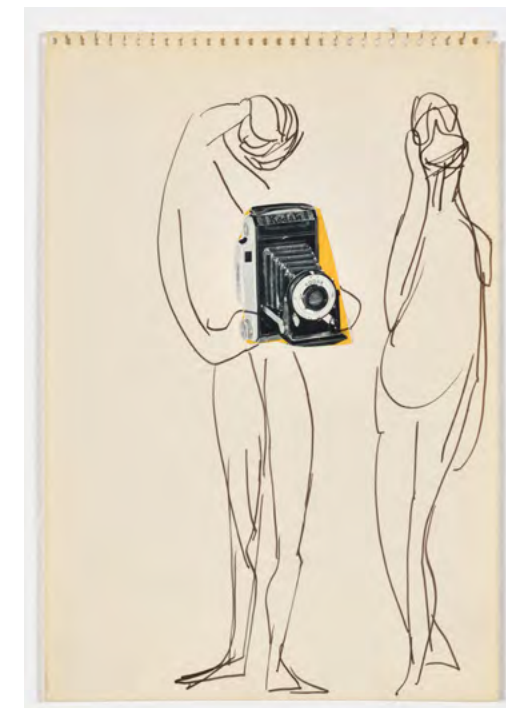
These stylised landscapes are also found in aquatint work: *Entre les blés* (1952), *Les grandes journées* (1953) and *Inondations rectilignes* (1956). *Marais salant*, a small 1954 ink drawing, sketches one of these landscaped forms with the fast movement and simplification that also prevail in his everyday drawings.

A large 1957 watercolour with subtle shades prefigures the changes that were to come in Messagier's work. The paintings of the 1960s feature whorls and volutes. The subjects and motifs are less identifiable. The poetic titles (inscribed on the works from 1963 onwards) are set out like initial intentions to which the artist aims: *Retourneurs d'automne*, *Paraphe d'été*, *Signature du mois d'août*, *Campagnols d'hiver*. Movement became ample. Watercolour or coloured pastel spread over the surface of the paper. In engraving he returned to drypoint with a freedom of gesture that became his own style. Art became vital movement. He felt the nature that surrounded him and retranscribed it in his work as if he were breathing it.

The exhibition is strongly focused on works on paper with the collection of drawings and engravings resulting from long collaboration between the artist and Jacques and Catherine Putman, who defended him with ardour. Jacques Putman published a great number of his prints and compiled the catalogue raisonné of Messagier's engravings.

Messagier, who liked engraving for the pleasure given by the line and its trace, also made a large number of monotypes. He freed himself from technical constraints and liked the effect of surprise. 'For me, a monotype is relaxation, an escape from the bite of acid into metal that impresses me; seeing acid penetrating copper always traumatises me—troubles me. A monotype is precisely halfway between engraving and painting.'⁽¹⁾
The three monotypes shown here demonstrate the alliance of this great mastery and this freedom.

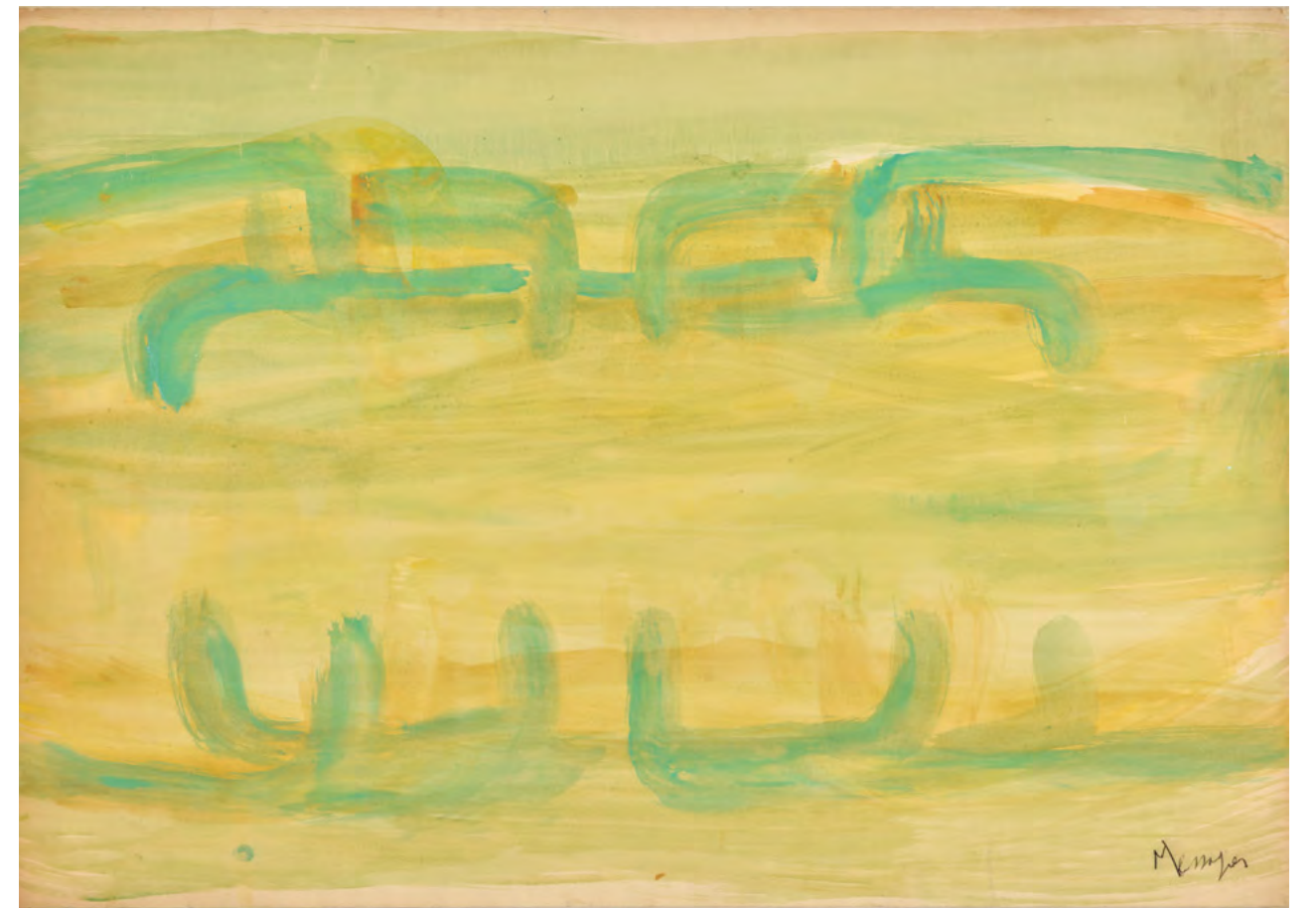
(1) From Jean Messagier's talk with Daniel Meiller and Patrick Le Nouene in 'Messagier, les estampes et les sculptures, 1945-1974', Yves Rivière, Arts et Métiers Graphiques, Paris, 1975, pp. 19-23



Jean Messagier *Sans titre*, 1954 | encre et collage sur papier | 24 x 16 cm



Jean Messagier *Entre les blés*, 1952 | aquatinte | 76 x 55 cm | 30 épreuves



Jean Messagier *Sans titre*, 1955 | watercolour on paper | 76 x 108 cm



Jean Messagier *Sans titre*, 1957 | watercolour on paper | 74 x 105 cm

Born in Paris on 13 July 1920.
Died in Montbéliard on 10 September 1999.

1942: He enters at the École nationale supérieure des Arts Décoratifs and follows Paul Valéry's poetry classes at the Collège de France in Paris. Participation in the second exhibition of the Society of Artists of the Pays de Montbéliard at the town museum.

1945: Exhibition for under-thirty year olds and first personal exhibition in Paris at the Galerie l'Arc-en-Ciel.

1945-1948: Numerous trips to Italy and Algeria with his wife, the ceramist Marcelle Baumann.

1952: He sets up a new workshop at the Moulin, on the banks of the Doubs, near Colombier-Fontaine. Participates in the exhibition «Peintres de la nouvelle école de Paris» at the invitation of the art critic Charles Estienne at the Babylone gallery. Participates in the creation of the October exhibition.

1953 : Group exhibition with Degottex, Loubchansky and Duvillier at the gallery l'étoile scellée, then at the Craven gallery where he meets Pierre Alechinsky.

1954 : Personal exhibition at the Palais des beaux-arts in Brussels.

1955: He organises a personal exhibition at the Volney Circle in Paris, where he meets Jacques Putman who introduces him to Bram van Velde.

1956: Enters the Michel Warren Gallery, Paris. Participates in a group exhibition at the Iris Clert Gallery, Paris, at the 2nd International Printmaking Exhibition in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia.

1958: Messagier, Alechinsky, Bram van Velde, Galerie Michel Warren, Paris. Twelve painters of the young school of Paris, Legendre Gallery, Paris. New talents in Europe', University of Alabama, USA.

1959 : Member of the committee of the May Salon.

1960 : First exhibition in New York, organised by Michel Warren. Enters the Schoeller Gallery in Paris.

1962 : Organises a big party for the inauguration of the Moulin, designed by the architect Jean-Louis Vêret. The same year he is one of the five artists to represent France at the Venice Biennale.

1963: Retrospective exhibition at Gallery A. Schoeller and Bernheim jeune gallery, Paris. La Monnaie de Paris commissions a medal from him.

1965 : He is one of the five painters representing France at the Biennale of Sao Paulo, Brazil.

1966 : Retrospective exhibition of his engravings at the Claude Bernard gallery, Paris. Participates in the exhibition «Grands et jeunes d'aujourd'hui» at the Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris.

1967 : Participation in the first edition of the «Suite Prisunic», initiated by Jacques Putman. Invited to Havana by the Cuban government to present the Salon de Mai.

1968 : Participates in the Intellectuals' Day for Vietnam in Paris. Refuses a retrospective at the Musée de Grenoble out of solidarity for the May events.

1969: First personal exhibition of sculptures in the Knoedler and Schoeller galleries in Paris.

1970 : Produces a decorative panel for Air France and several tapestry boards for the Manufactures des Gobelins and de Beauvais.

1971 : Great exhibition of his engraved work in Freiburg and Worpswede in Germany. Publication of the catalogue raisonné of the engraved work.

1977 : Organises the «Festivals of the Future» at the Royal Saltworks of Arc et Senans.

1981 : Retrospective exhibition at the Grand Palais, Paris.

1997: «Engraved and lithographed work», Musée du Dessin et de l’Estampe », Gravelines
«Jean Messagier ou le réalisme éclaté», Gustave Courbet museum, Ornans.

1999: Jean Messagier, Larock-Granoff gallery, Paris.
«Hommage à Jean Messagier 1920-1999», Frank Pages gallery, Baden-Baden.

2000: «Tribute 1950-1995» at the Cherbourg-Octeville Cultural Centre (Cherbourg)
and L’arc scène sationale (Le Creusot).
«Oeuvres graphiques, 1943-1998», Baron-Martin Museum, Gray.
«Tribute to Jean Messagier, 1920-1999», Montbéliard museum.

2001: «Sophia Vari and Jean Messagier», Ludwigmuseum, Koblenz.

2003: «Monotypes and engravings» at the Zadkine museum (Les Arques) and the Rignault museum (Saint-Cirq-Lapopie), Jean Messagier in Nantes, Maison de la Culture, Oratoire chapel, Gustave Fayet contemporary art space, Nantes.

2004: «Jean Messagier, Accès à l’été», espace d’art contemporain Gustave Fayet, Sérignan
«Jean Messagier: doors for a joy», Musée Paul Valéry, Sète.
«Jean Messagier», Jacques Girard Gallery, Toulouse.

2006: Michel Jouët and Jean Messagier, Athanor cultural centre, Guérande
«The nature of gesture», Buffon museum, Montbard.
«Jean Messagier : l’oeuvre graphique», Denon museum, Chalon-sur-Saône.
«Jean Messagier: nature in the palm of your hand», Musée du Château des Ducs de Wurtemberg and Musée d’Art et d’Histoire, Hôtel Beurnier-Rossel, Montbéliard.

2009: «Jean Messagier, abstract landscapes», Dock-Sud gallery, Sète
Lerock-Granoff Gallery, Paris.

2011: «Jean Messagier», ASCAP art library, Montbéliard
Galerie Perrin (ex-Malriat), Montbéliard

2013: «Jean Messagier», Galerie Bernard Ceysson Paris, France

2016: «Painting without restraint», with Claude Viallat, Galerie Bernard Ceysson, Wandhaff, Luxembourg

2018: Solo exhibition «On pleure devant une vallée perdue», Galerie Catherine Putman, Paris
Drawing Now, Carreau du temple, Paris, Galerie Catherine Putman
«Tous les sexes du printemps - Jean Messagier», Dole Museum of Fine Arts



Jean Messagier *Sans titre*, 1963 | watercolour on paper | 73,5 x 106,5 cm



Jean Messagier *Campagnols d'hiver* - exhibition view - March 2021 - Galerie Catherine Putman



Jean Messagier *Signature du mois d'août*, c.1966 | pastel on paper | 75 x 108 cm





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Jean Messagier *Accoudoirs de printemps II*, 1962 | monotype | 58 x 92,5 cm