

GALERIE CATHERINE PUTMAN

Jean Messagier

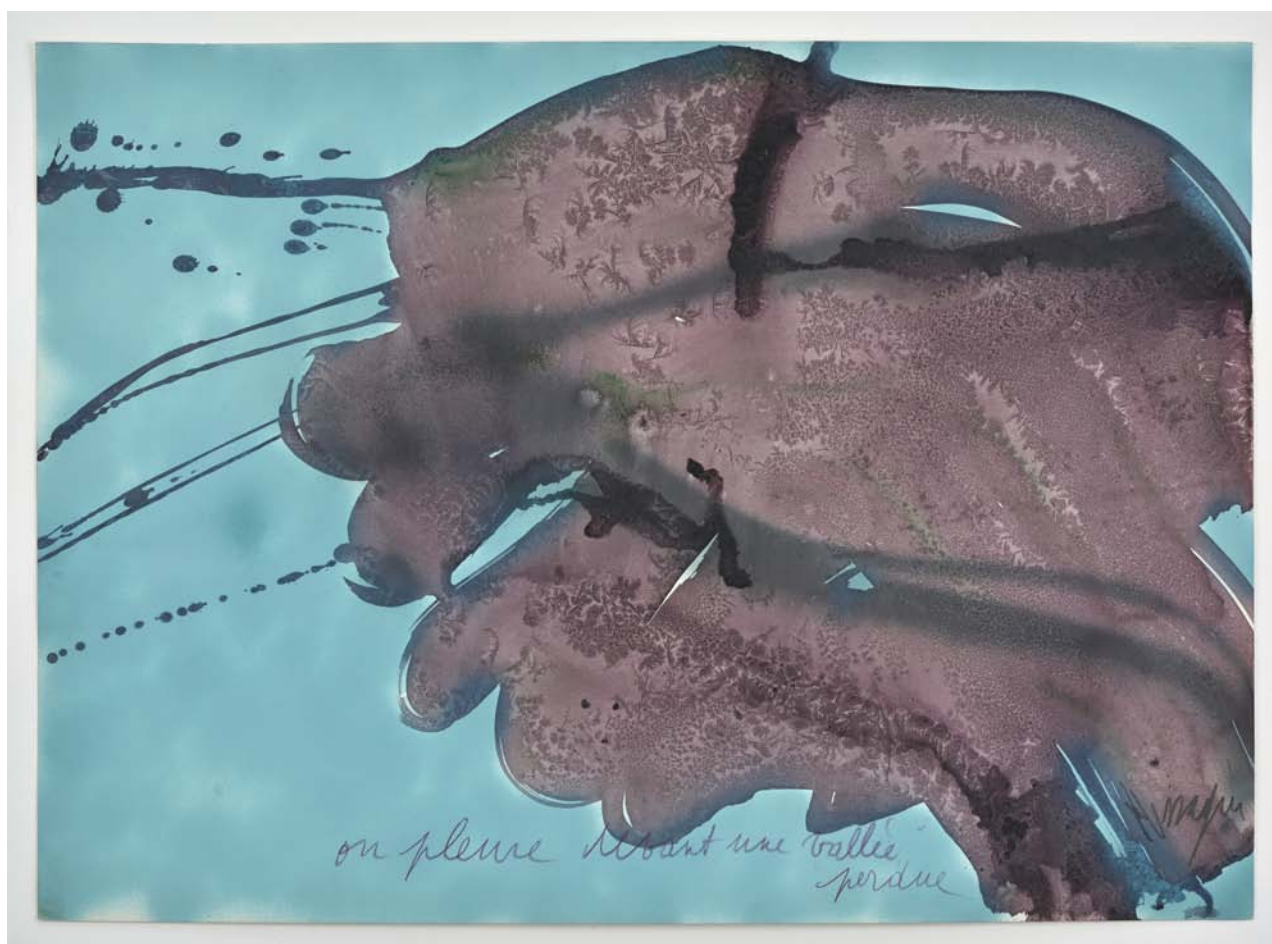
On pleure devant une vallée perdue

13 January – 10 March 2018

Opening

Saturday 13th January

4 – 8 pm



Jean Messagier «On pleure devant une vallée perdue», circa 1973 | gouache on paper | 76 x 105,5 cm

40, rue Quincampoix 75004 Paris | 1^{er} étage

T. +33 1 45 55 23 06 | Du mardi au samedi de 14 à 19 heures et sur rendez-vous

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The Galerie Catherine Putman is pleased to present “On pleure devant une vallée perdue” an exhibition devoted to the work of Jean Messagier (1920 - 1999).

The exhibition comprises a selection of works from the exceptional collection of engravings and drawings, which was compiled during a long collaboration between the artist and Jacques and Catherine Putman, who staunchly supported him.

A flamboyant figure and a generous, prolific, and multi-faceted artist, Jean Messagier was a French painter, sculptor, and engraver. Involved in various post-war artistic movements, he never wanted to choose between abstraction and figuration. His work is primarily characterised by its extraordinary exuberance and highly poetic quality. Considered as a whole—he was also a poet, composer, activist, and an organiser of festivities—, his work can be understood in terms of its relation with life and nature, which he endeavoured to capture fully: the movements and changes of nature.

The works presented in the exhibition have been brought together under the title “On pleure devant une vallée perdue”, after a painting on paper with the same title, in which art is put to the test by nature, and goes beyond landscape. In the 1950s, he worked directly with nature, making sculptures in sand, snow, and grass.

At the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, in an attempt to identify man’s place in nature and nature’s place in art, Jean Messagier experimented with new techniques and materials, and strove to capture nature.

In the “gels” (“frosts”) series, at night in below zero temperatures, he captured the patterns made by the air and the cold in the watercolour paints. “I’m moving towards ecology, and now I must use all the elements, their prolongation, and their effects”(…) “This is how I developed the prints of grass and particularly the pieces of frost that I mechanically placed on the canvas, where they left their traces”. *L’amour chez les noisettes*, *Des fleurs pour l’Asie*, and *On pleure devant une vallée perdue* all resulted from this process.

In the years that followed, Jean Messagier—in *Thalamus pour deux printemps*, *Les narines ouvertes sur le grand beau temps*, and ***Le sacre des têtards***—introduced bright colours using gouache and pastel and especially fluorescent aerosol, which he also used in the winter of 1976 to draw on the snow.

These experiments, conducted towards the end of the 1960s, led him to work with monotype. ‘The monotype was exactly halfway between engraving and painting’ and also enabled the artist to directly capture materials, objects, and plants.

Ten or so paintings and monotypes on paper displayed in the exhibition attest to this association between nature, humour, and poetry.

The exhibition also includes a selection of engravings, dry point works and aquatints, executed between the end of the '60s and the beginning of the '90s.

Jean Messagier began engraving in 1944 after studying at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, a practice that complemented his painting. 'I really wanted to do engraving because I was well aware that in painting alone it was impossible to obtain the impression of density and the incredible pleasure of lines.' Subsequently, the use of aquatint added the satisfaction of using colour.

As of 1968, Jacques Putman became the main publisher of Jean Messagier's engravings, and he was also responsible for the casting of his sculptures.

The artist also took part in all the editions of the "Suites Prisunic de Gravures Originales Contemporaines" ("The Prisunic series of contemporary engravings") between 1967 and 1971. In response to a proposition by Jacques Putman, aimed at democratising art, the Prisunic stores sold engravings (for 100 Francs per copy) by contemporary artists, printed in 300 copies. The works of Jean Messagier, Alechinsky, Wilfredo Lam, Roberto Matta, Reinhold, and Bram van Velde featured in the first edition, and were soon followed by those of Tal Coat, Arman, Dewasne, Jean Tinguely, and Christo, amongst others.

All of the artist's quotations are extracts from the interview with Jean Messagier, conducted by Daniel Meiller and Patrick Le Nouene in *Messagier, les Estampes et les Sculptures, 1945-1974* ('Massager: prints and sculptures, 1945-1974'), Yves Rivière, Arts et Métiers Graphiques, Paris, 1975. Pages 19-23

Jean Messagier is born in Paris in 1920 and died in Montbéliard in 1999.



Jean Messagier « Le sacre des têtards », circa 1978 | gouache on paper | 76 x 105 cm



Jean Messagier «Hommage à la mâche sauvage», 1976 | pastel and painting on paper | 69 x 71 cm



Jean Messagier « 32 kilomètres de printemps », 1974 | aquatint and dry point | 63,4 x 91,3 cm | 50 ex
Editions Jacques Putman



Jean Messagier « Denti Leoni II », 1992 | dry point | 50,1 x 66 cm | 15 ex
Editions Jacques Putman