

GALERIE CATHERINE PUTMAN

Pierre Alechinsky, Pierre Courtin, Jean Messagier, Bram van Velde

&

Les Suites Prisunic avec Christo, Jean Dewasne, Roberto Matta
Niki de Saint-Phalle, Yasse Tabuchi, Pierre Tal Coat, Jean Tinguely, etc ...

Sous l'œil et la plume de Jacques Putman

4 June – 13 July 2022

Opening

Saturday 4 June from 2 pm to 7 pm



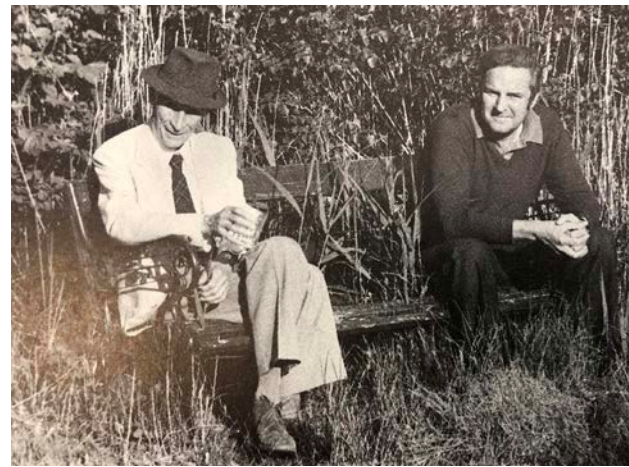
Jacques Putman, Bram van Velde, Jan Krugier and Pierre Alechinsky
Paris, 1955

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Sous l'œil et la plume de Jacques Putman

The original title of a lithograph and a photo by Pierre Alechinsky made in 1989 for exhibition in homage to Jacques Putman at the LARC ⁽¹⁾, *L'Œil et la plume* was then used in 2007 by Editions l'Échoppe as the title of the collection of texts and interviews, with a preface by Pierre Alechinsky, that Jacques Putman had devoted to several artists from 1958 to 1978.

It was natural to choose this title for the new exhibition at Galerie Catherine Putman as a key to reading Jacques Putman's professional career: art criticism and his involvement with artists. This took the form of publications and the circulation of multiple art works.



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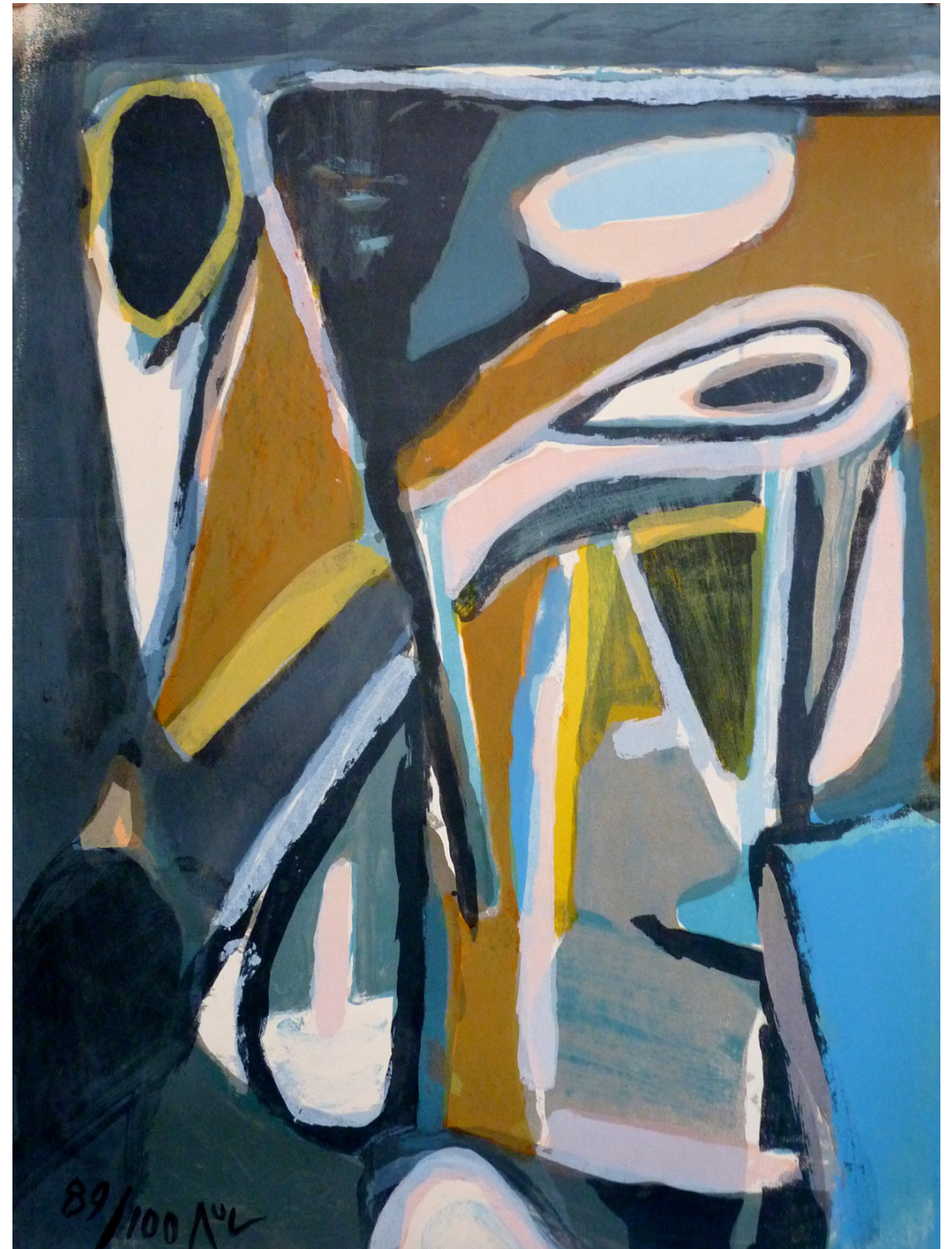
After the adventure of the Suites Prisunic for which he organised from 1967 to 1972 an original operation for the democratisation of contemporary art, showing contemporary prints in *Prisunic* supermarkets, Jacques Putman founded in 1974 the 'Société de diffusion d'œuvres plastiques et multiples', still under the name Galerie Catherine Putman. It defines the contours of its work as art publisher, work carried out by three hands – artist-publisher-printer –, its faithfulness to artists and longstanding collaboration to produce a large number of original works in France and abroad.



2.

This way of working is still used at the gallery where an exhibition is dedicated to Jacques Putman for the first time. Without being exhaustive, the show concentrates on describing the state of mind of the great man by proposing the reading of his writings and the rediscovery of the artists that he liked.

It features an emblematic selection of the éditions Prisunic and is hinged on four artists and friends: Pierre Alechinsky, Pierre Courtin, Jean Messagier and Bram van Velde.



(1) Centre d'action culturelle Le Creusot

1. : Bram van Velde and Jacques Putman - Sologne, 1977

2. : Bram van Velde, Stephane Janssen and Jacques Putman, retrospective Bram van Velde, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, December 1970-January 1971

Les Suites Prisunic

‘Nobody will deny that it is the daily contact with the work that first and foremost makes deep understanding more difficult but that is passionate and enriching when it is the art in which we live and hence events that shock and seem momentarily to be the privilege of an intellectual elite before being integrated in society and becoming a common heritage’.

Jacques Putman, *La Suite Prisunic* (1967-68), *L'Œil*, Paris, n°155, novembre 1967

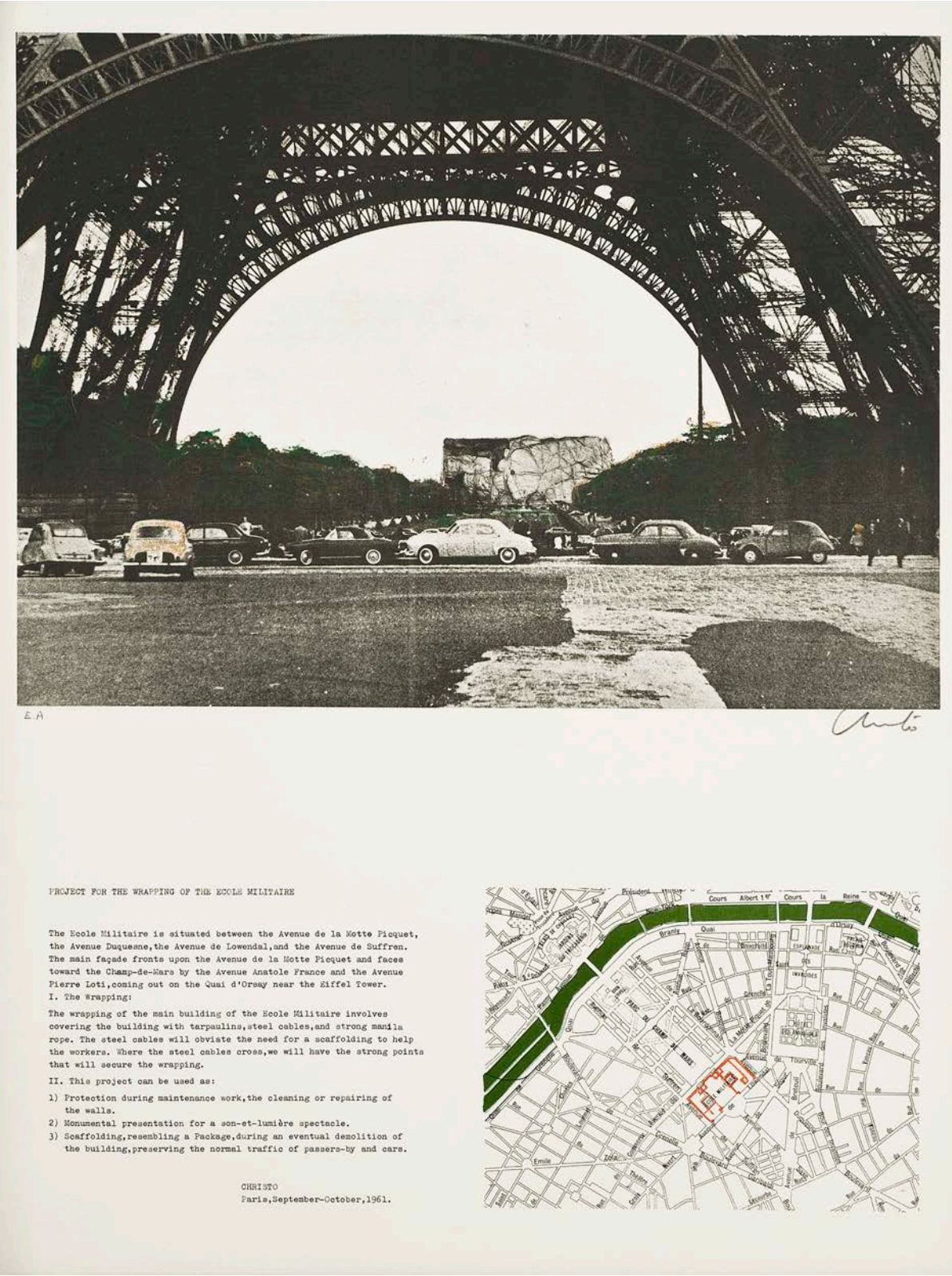
From 1967 to 1972, Prisunic, with its fervent defense of ‘*design for all*’ entrusted Jacques Putman with one of the first operations to democratise art—to call on different creators to provide ‘the beautiful at the price of the ugly’ in the departments of its shops (2).

So Jacques Putman invited eighteen artists to participate in the project. Some just made two prints while others participated in all Les Suites. The principle was simple, that of making an original work in 65 x 50 cm format. Some artists used lithography, others worked on copper engraving or offset. All the works had a print run of 300 handled by reputable Parisian printers and were signed, numbered and priced at 100 FFr.

Artists close to the School of Paris – Tal Coat, Bram van Velde and Jean Messagier – certain figures of New Realism – Arman, Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely – and abstract constructivists such as Jean Dewasne, Cobra (CoBrA), Pierre Alechinsky and Asger Jorn participated.

This audacious and innovative adventure had a varying degree of success depending on the shop but gained recognition in the art world, firmly marking Jacques Putnam’s beginning as an art publisher.

Jacques Putman entered the art world by way of writing, criticism and journalism (in particular, he made regular contributions to the journal *L'Œil*). The exhibition is thus centred on the four main artists whom he wrote about regularly and whose work he supported to a considerable extent through exhibitions, publications and catalogues.



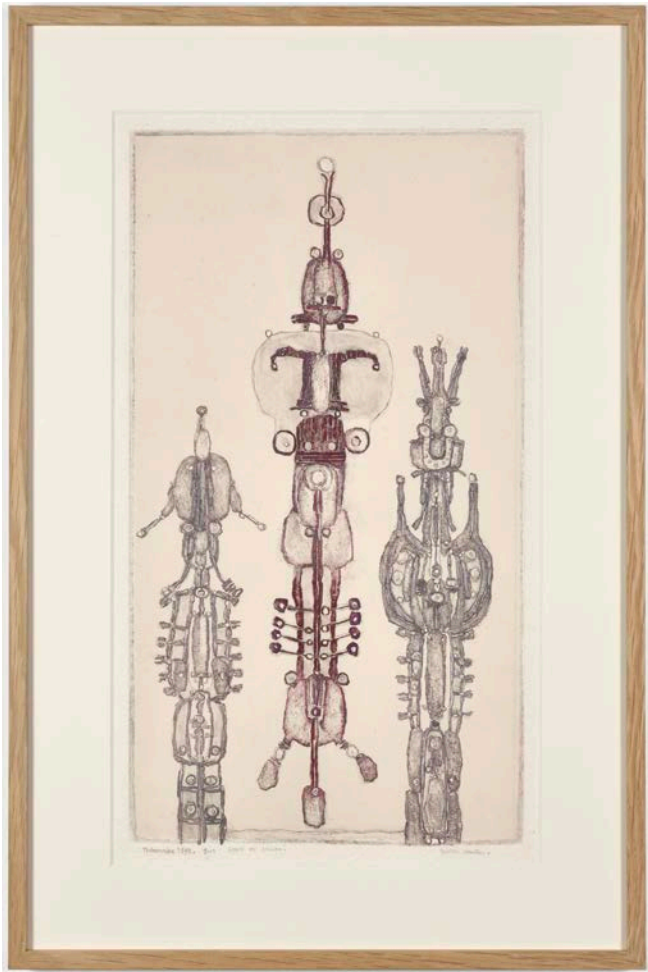
Christo *Projet pour l'emballage de l'Ecole Militaire*, 1972 | lithograph| 50 x 65 cm | Editions Jacques Putman pour les Suites Prisunic | 300 ex

(2) The Musée des arts décoratifs has just had an exhibition devoted to the subject : Le Design pour tous : de Prisunic à Monoprix, une aventure française, MAD, Paris, 2022.

Pierre Alechinsky first of all, of Belgian descent and also born in 1927, met Jacques Putman again in Paris in the early 1950s. He thus said of Alechinsky ‘*I thus followed his effort in synthesis, concentration and reflection in both the literary and pictorial aspects for 40 years*’⁽³⁾. He wrote about his work and brought him into the Prisunic adventure and cast his sculptures in bronze: the Cryptocylindres and the Cryptocube. Alechinsky handled his own business but Jacques Putman always made sure of publishing and selling his works.



Pierre Courtin (1921-2012) a painter and above all an exceptional engraver, fascinated Jacques Putman, who launched the catalogue raisonné *Pierre Courtin, l'œuvre gravé, 1944-1972*⁽⁴⁾. He published several of his colour lithographs that were close to his painting, but his burin engravings intrigued him more. ‘*Courtin lives in total familiarity with his press, making trial prints on various materials that were perishable or not—cloth, newspaper or wrapping paper, restaurant tablecloths (...). In the years when Pierre Courtin deciphered the field of engraving the avant-garde did not cover this in either technical or artistic innovation (...). What after him became common or feasible (...)* Courtin’s 1947 cut engravings, 1948 white engravings and 1949 direct prints of objects were in fact risky experiments with no aesthetic codification.’



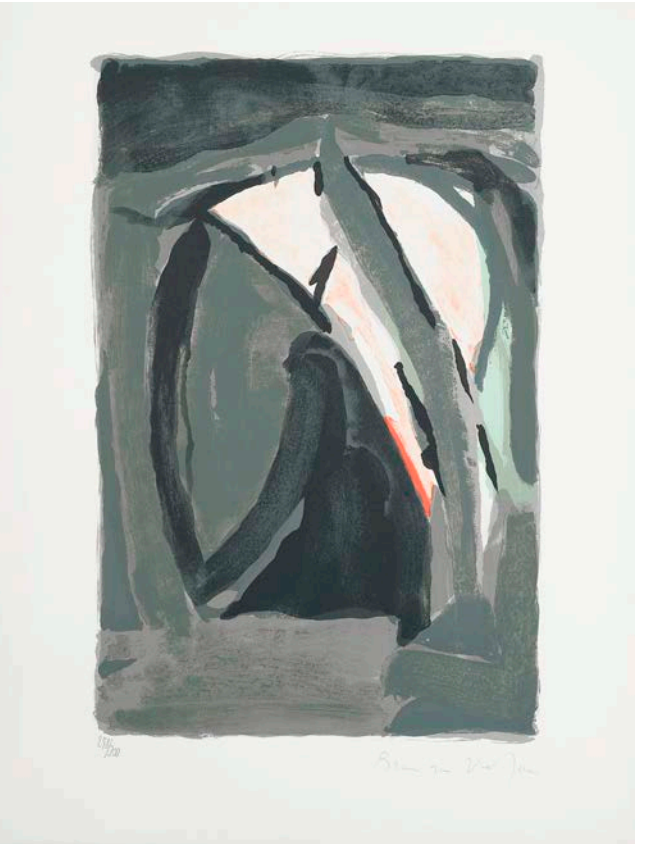
(3) Article published in Vogue on the occasion of the Pierre Alechinsky exhibition at the Solomon Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 1987.
(4) Published by Éditions Yves Rivière, Paris.

Pierre Alechinsky *Linolog I* (with Christian Dotremont), 1972 | linocut | 39 x 52 cm | 300 ex | Editions Jacques Putman pour les Suites Prisunic
Pierre Courtin *Sorti du sillon*, 1979 | burin | 51 x 33 cm | 10 épreuves

Jean Messagier (1920-1999) met Jacques Putman in 1955. The two had common esteem for each other and it was perfectly natural that Jacques Putman should suggest participation in the Prisunic adventure in 1967. In 1968, Jacques Putman became the main publisher of Messagier’s engravings—remarkable drypoint and aquatint work and also handled the casting of his sculptures. He prefaced the catalogue raisonné Messagier, *Les Estampes et les sculptures 1945-1974*⁽⁵⁾ with a very fine text entitled *Do not choose*, in which he renders the artist’s poetry without paraphrasing it: ‘*Like winter, summer, autumn and spring, encompass the pitiful phantasmagoria of people alone or in a group, injured or intact at their celebrations, parades or meetings and nature — in what it possesses that has grandeur and that is touching in its geology or in the precarity of its moments.*’



Bram van Velde (1895-1981) was the great artistic adventure of his life. The young critic soon got to know him when he arrived in Paris. After the failure of his exhibition at Galerie Maeght in 1952, Jacques Putman took the Dutch artist under his wing. He wrote about his work, showed it and obtained exhibitions in France and abroad. Bram van Velde painted little and lithography was the solution for Jacques to show such limited work : ‘*It is just help to get out of solitude. Lithography is a bit like records—it is work of penetration. A painting is too rare a thing to have an impact. Lithography is marvellous because without betraying the invention — you can make a hundred or so— which greatly changes the situation.*’⁽⁶⁾ Jacques Putman cared for this artist until his death, saying that ‘*Bram van Velde’s painting aims at giving form to our lives that do not have form, that causes anguish and is discouraging: he displays no aestheticism, a brutal cry that nobody seems prepared to hear.*’⁽⁷⁾ The two are buried together in Catherine Putman’s family tomb in Arles.

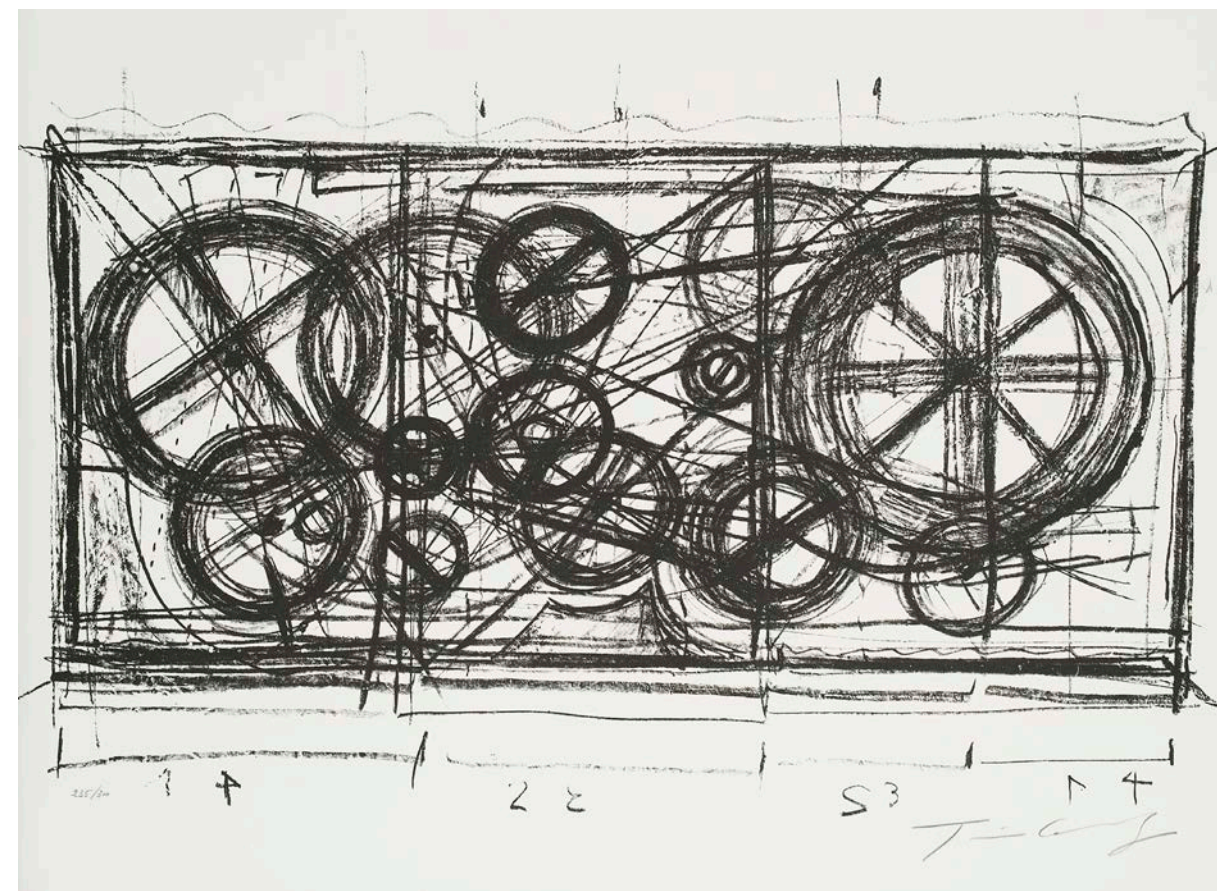


(5) Published by Éditions Yves Rivière, Arts et Métiers Graphiques, Paris, 1975.
(6) Bram van Velde ‘*Je me méfie de la peinture*’; interview by Gilles Plazy in Le Quotidien de Paris, 1975.
(7) Bram van Velde, *catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre peint*, Jacques Putman 1907-1960, Turin, Fratelli Pozzo, 1961.

Jean Messagier *Printemps à déplier*, 1972 | aquatint and dry point | 66,5 x 48,5 cm
300 ex | Editions Jacques Putman pour les Suites Prisunic
Bram van Velde *Lumière noire*, 1970 | lithograph | 65,5 x 49 cm | 300 ex | Editions Jacques Putman pour les Suites Prisunic



Niki de Saint-Phalle *Les amoureux*, 1971 | lithograph | 65 x 48 cm | 300 ex | Editions Jacques Putman pour les Suites Prisunic



Jean Tinguely *Requiem pour une feuille morte*, 1966 | lithograph | 48,5 x 66 cm | 300 ex | Editions Jacques Putman pour les Suites Prisunic



1.

Jacques Putman was born in Brussels in 1926.

After studying law, he had an art criticism column from 1946 in *Le Peuple* and then became the Brussels correspondent of the Paris magazine *Arts*. He settled in Paris in 1948.

He was working on art criticism and writing when, in 1949, he married Françoise Schildge, whose mother organised the *Salon des moins de trente ans*. They lived for a while in Vezelay, close to Georges Bataille. This is when he met Bram van Velde.

He wrote frequently for the magazine *L'Œil* in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1960 he married Andrée Aynard who thus became Andrée Putman and introduced Jacques to the Prisunic retail chain where Denise Fayolle asked him to produce a series of original prints by contemporary artists at reasonable prices: *Les Suites Prisunic* 1967-1972.

This project marked his beginnings as an art publisher. In 1974, he then founded the SDOPM, Société de diffusion d'œuvres plastiques et multiples. He worked in their large apartment in Rue des Grands Augustins, where he stored prints in lithography cabinets still used today in the gallery in Rue Quincampoix. Collectors, artists, writers and many European dealers and professionals visited him there.

Jacques Putman was never a printer. For him, the work of the publisher was a three-way collaboration : the artists, the publisher who often triggered the project and funded and defined the print run, and then the printer.

In 1975, he met Catherine Béraud who he very soon involved in his activities. They were married several years later.

In 1982, shortly after the death of Bram van Velde, he suffered a stroke. He was weakened but nonetheless continued to work with his wife. After his death in 1994, Catherine Putman continued the Editions Putman adventure in Rue de Talleyrand and then opened the gallery in Rue Quincampoix in 2005. She died in 2009.

The gallery still continues the publishing work started by Jacques and displays exhibitions of unique works on paper in the spirit given by Catherine. It is run by their daughter-in-law Eléonore Chatin.



2.



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4.

1. : Jacques Putman, 1977
2. : Jacques Putman and Bram van Velde 1979, rue des Grands Augustin, Paris
3. : Jacques Putman and his dog Rex in the studio of outassaou, in Grimaud, in front of paintings cat. n. 134 and 135, 1979
4. : Bram van Velde *Untitled* (MP257), 1977 | lithograph | 42,5 x 63 cm | 100 ex | Editions Jacques Putman