

Exposition

January 26 - February 23 2019

Opening Saturday January 26

MARYAN, Germaine RICHIER
„Il n'est pas à la beauté d'autre origine que la
blessure, singulière“, Jean Genet



Maryan, *Sans titre*, 1972.

Gouache et encre sur papier sous boîte plexi. 31 x 41 cm.

“Beauty has no other origin than that of a wound, singular, different for each individual, hidden or visible, that everyone keeps within, that we preserve, and to which we withdraw when we want to leave the world for a temporary but profound solitude. This art is therefore far from what we call miserabilism. Giacometti’s art seems to me to wish to discover the secret wound of any being and even that of any thing, in order to illuminate them.”

Jean Genet, “L’atelier d’Alberto Giacometti”, 1958.

Jean Genet’s words in the studio of Alberto Giacometti open our eyes to what unites the work of Maryan and of Germaine Richier: they discover a “secret wound”, the same violence, the same mute scream.

After World War II, a wave of abstraction unfurled (lyrical, geometric, minimalist, and so on) but very quickly – countering Ludwig Wittgenstein’s expression: “Concerning that which we cannot speak, we must remain silent” – another path was affirmed, although it remained more confidential. Far from this informal art that strives to bury humanity in the depths of its matter (cf. Jean Fautrier), solitary attempts arise and are organised to reveal barbarism (Dmitrienko, Music, Jorn, Dubuffet, or Guston in the United States). What cannot be said must absolutely not be silenced. It must be written about or drawn about.

This was how, from 1971 onwards, at the invitation of his American psychoanalyst, Maryan, a deported Polish Jew found half-dead among corpses, survived the death marches with his body riddled with bullets and came to fill nine notebooks with four hundred and seventy eight captioned drawings that he entitled *Ecce homo*. It is no longer a question of stating or describing the horror, but of recognising the bodies, our bodies.

Bodies stripped bare, soiled, beaten, and humiliated. Faceless heads, deprived of the gaze of Maryan’s Personages, which vomit their guts up to decry the horror and traumatic experience of the camps. Figures reduced to their organs whose gaping mouths produce the terror of Francis Bacon’s Crucifixions. The coarseness – despite its refinement – of the colourful watercolours clashes with the dark and naïve sag of the crudely drawn members. It elicits disgust mixed with fascination, full of the vital energy emanating from it.

The faceless body of *L’Orage* and its female equivalent *L’Ouragane* sculpted by Germaine Richier that, immediately after the war, manifest a primitive, brute, and unsettling force. Humans whose matter has been “long martyred [...] where, since the first clay, down to the final metal, Germaine Richier has endlessly filed, stabbed, gnawed, amputated, and grafted. Tremendously impassioned work.”[1]

Juxtaposed, these artworks dialogue through the lively tension that animates them and that relies on a troubling contrast: barbarism and the wound are presented with a degree of bawdiness. The expression of bestiality and violence is presented through a playful, naïve, and popular iconography. The tormented sculptures of Germaine Richier assume an allegorical and fantastical character and – notably the *Diabolo* – borrow from the circus world. Maryan’s garish watercolours ridicule the figures of power and judgement and stage crowned heads resembling buffoons and masquerades.

But if we look beyond an expressionistic reading, we do find silence. The silence of humanity, abandoned and alone.

[1] André Pieyre de Mandiargues, Germaine Richier, in *Le Belvédère* (Paris: Grasset, 1958), 25.

MARYAN (1927-1977)

The artist known as Maryan was born Pinchas Burntein to a Jewish family in Poland in 1927. Maryan spent World War II in various ghettos, labor camps, he moved after the war to Jerusalem and began to focus upon the development of his artistic practice. He moved to Paris in the early 1950s, where he quickly became a preeminent figure in the post-war European neo-avant-garde, exhibiting his work at the Galerie de France, as well as at the Galerie Claude Bernard, where he showed with Francis Bacon, Balthus, and Peter Blake. In 1962, tired of the Parisian art world, Maryan moved with his wife to New York, where he lived at the Chelsea Hotel until his death in 1977. His work is part of important public collections such as, Museum of Modern Art, New York, Museum of Modern Art, Paris, National Museum of Modern Art, Paris, Art Institute of Chicago, Museum of Jerusalem, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D. C. ...

Germaine Richier (1902-1959)

French sculptor Germaine Richier was trained in the 1920s at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Montpellier at the studio of renowned bust-maker Louis-Jacques Guigues and with the Rodin-trained bronze expert Antoine Bourdelle in Paris, at the same time as Alberto Giacometti. Trained classically, usually sculpting from a live model, the one who was nicknamed *L’Ouragane* spent the majority of her art career creating powerful and often melancholic human and animal forms out of darkly tarnished bronze. Germaine Richier is one of the most important French sculptors of the post-war period. In 1936 she won the Prix Blumenthal and exhibited extensively during her lifetime, including five times at the Venice Biennale and at international museums. Since she died in 1959, venues worldwide have continued to showcase her extensive oeuvre.



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