

MARCEL STORR
ŒUVRES CHOISIES

02.04.2021 – 31.07.2021

“Whether learned or not, every work of genius appears to us at first as unique, unclassifiable, and we feel a shock when we see it for the first time. Like the truly inspired, the reformers or inventors of worlds, Storr, the sweeper of the Bois de Boulogne, was a visionary genius, and he knew it”

Laurent Danchin

Marcel Storr was born in Paris in 1911. He was abandoned by his mother at the age of three and placed by the Assistance Publique as a farmhand, then went on to spend his teenage years between foster families and sanatoriums. He suffered from deafness and was physically and psychologically abused. After reaching his majority, Storr did various jobs while at the same time drawing in the utmost secrecy. A report dated 1946 by an inspector from the Assistance Publique notes a definite artistic gift. In the early 1960s his future wife, Marthe, was taken on as a caretaker at a school in Rue Milton, in the 9th arrondissement of Paris. Shortly afterwards Storr found a more stable job with Paris city council, sweeping up dead leaves in the Bois de Boulogne.

Over more than forty years Storr, who had no artistic education, created an extraordinary ensemble of some sixty drawings of imaginary buildings, executed on big sheets of drawing paper with scrupulous details and shimmering colours, and on an immense scale. In 1971 Marthe showed these drawings to Liliane Kempf, the president of a parent-teacher association she met during her work. Storr now developed a relationship with the Kempfs, which grew stronger after his wife's death in 1972. They gave him material and moral support. In the years before his death, in 1976, Storr was frequently hospitalised. He was diagnosed with persecution mania and megalomania. The Kempfs became the executors of his will after his death, ensuring the conservation of his work, and then its dissemination. And so it has been for nearly forty years.

“It is hard to say what is more surprising, the perfectly mastered execution of a drawing in which complexities of perspective are resolved with stunning skill, or the chromatic harmonies that prompt comparisons with Monet and Bonnard. Marcel Storr is indeed a great painter. Notions of genre such as ‘art brut’ or ‘art of the mad’ show themselves to be inadequate before such works” (Philippe Dagen).

Storr's corpus comprises two main parts: a first set of works dedicated to religious buildings (churches, cathedrals and basilicas), all frontally represented with flat facades like cardboard sets; and a second dedicated to megacities, futuristic cities, gigantic and utopian structures, reflecting Storr's fascination with towers, especially the ones that sprang up during the construction of La Défense, a business district in Paris that the artist personally saw rising up from the ground, day after day for years, when he was working on the lawns at the Bagatelle gardens in the Bois de Boulogne.

His work is dominated by unusual buildings that come straight out of his imagination, rising up to the sky in an enchantment of bright colours. In 1964 Storr elaborated his twenty-five invented religious buildings, churches like trees or exotic fruits. A year later, the artist gave up churches to concentrate exclusively on megacities, lakeside cities and fictional temples. These large-format drawings were executed in graphite and then coloured in ink.

Lost in these panoramas' infinite details, our focus oscillates constantly between two opposing scales, the monumental and the tiny. The human species seems to be crushed by the constructions: crowds of miniature figures gather at the feet of towers like columns of ants, teeming between futuristic vehicles, Viking longships and trees. We would need to take a magnifying glass and kneel for several hours in order to keep picking them out, again and again.

Storr never wanted his paintings to be shown. His need to create was obsessive. Every evening, after the day's work, he would go back to his art and, when finished, hide his drawings under the wax tablecloth of the kitchen in his lodge. All his life Storr thought of himself as an absolute genius, and was sure of posthumous glory.

He was convinced that Paris would be destroyed and that the president of the United States would need to borrow his drawings in order to rebuild it. His work therefore formulated an architectural response to help rebuild the city in the eventuality of an attack.

The work of Marcel Storr has been shown in these exhibitions:

“Aux frontières de l'art brut 2”, halle Saint-Pierre, Paris, 09.10.2001 - 01.06.2002;
“Magic Architecture, INSITA 2007”, Slovenská Národná Galéria, Bratislava, 23.06.2007 - 30.09.2007; “Les territoires de l'Art Modeste”, Musée International des Arts Modestes, Sète, 26.11.2010 - 02.10.2011; “Marcel Storr : bâtisseur visionnaire”, pavillon carré de Baudouin, Paris, 16.12.2011 - 31.03.2012; “Vues d'en haut”, Centre Pompidou-Metz, 18.05.2013 - 07.10.2013; “The Alternative Guide to the Universe”, Hayward Gallery, London, 11.06.2013 - 26.08.2013; “Marcel Storr: Reimagining Paris”, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, 13.09.2014 - 25.10.2014; “The Museum of Everything”, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, 11.06.2017 - 02.04.2018.

On the occasion of the exhibition “Marcel Storr. Œuvres choisies”, Loevenbruck gallery is pleased to announce the international representation of the work of Marcel Storr, in collaboration with Charles Geoffrion, manager of the Marcel Storr fund, and the Kempf family, owner of the work.

Marcel Storr, *Sans titre* (détail), 1936
Graphite mine, colored pencils and varnish on Canson paper, 25 3/16 x 19 5/16 in (64 x 49 cm)
© Photo Fabrice Gousset, Fonds Marcel Storr, courtesy Loevenbruck, Paris.

Portrait of Marcel Storr
Unknown photographer
Black and white photographic print, 5 1/2 x 3 15/16 in (14,5 x 10,5 cm)
Fonds Marcel Storr
© Photo Fabrice Gousset, courtesy Loevenbruck, Paris.

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Gallery opening hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11am-7pm and by appointment.