

**GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA**

PARIS - BRUSSELS

## **Eugène Leroy**

### Paintings & Charcoals

8 January — 8 March 2013

Rue Charles Decoster 8 - Brussels 1050



Eugène Leroy, Couplet d'aout, 1995. Oil on canvas, 130 x 100 cm (51 1/8 x 39 3/8 in.)

The Nathalie Obadia Gallery is delighted to present the work of painter Eugène Leroy. This event is a tribute to the painter from the North who lived and worked his whole life on the geographical and cultural borders of France and Belgium.

Eugène Leroy, who was born in Tourcoing in 1910, studied at the School of Fine Arts in Lille, and then in Paris, in 1931. Seven years later, he held the first exhibition of his paintings, reflecting the shock of his simultaneous meeting with Rembrandt's Jewish Bride and the paintings of Malevitch, which he discovered in 1936 on a trip to Flanders and the Netherlands. This Nordic ascendancy, which was never to leave him, has been cleverly decoded by Rainer Michael Mason, the curator of *Georg Baselitz – Eugène Leroy: Le récit et la condensation*, the show running until 24 February at MUBA | Eugène Leroy in Tourcoing (Musée des Beaux-Arts). He explains that by partially relinquishing 'formality', Eugène Leroy composes with 'a sort of absence, so that the painting is totally itself, focusing on the taste borrowed from Flanders for joyous emotion buried in the sediments of the paint, dreaming of Rembrandt and his dull tones'<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Extract from the catalogue *Georg Baselitz – Eugène Leroy: Le récit et la condensation*, coedition Somogy and Muba | Eugène Leroy, 2013.

Another guiding influence alongside the Dutch master was Jean Fautrier (1898-1964), who embodies the French part of Eugène Leroy's work. From Rembrandt or Fautrier, each of whom explores the multiple possibilities of matter in his own way, Eugène Leroy inherited the science of impasto, lending his paintings that incomparable relief, to the point of 'penetrating into a cave', to quote Baselitz, recalling his first encounter with Eugène Leroy's painting, in Paris, in 1961: 'I found in it images as brown as fields, as stone, as wood, as moss, as scent. A simple Dutch composition with an unheard-of accumulation of colours (...) as if all of the painter's trousers were hanging on a hook, telling the story of an unknown masterpiece'. The great German painter was one of the first to see in Eugène Leroy's painting 'a completely different phenomenon' in the Paris of the New Realists.

The works on show at the Nathalie Obadia Gallery in Brussels – 9 paintings and 13 charcoals – date from the period 1989 to 1999, a key decade for the artist, who was watching his work begin to garner international recognition. One notable illustration of this is the fact that Eugène Leroy participated in succession in the Sao Paulo Biennale (1990) and in documenta IX in Kassel (1991) under the artistic direction of Jan Hoet, founder of SMAK in Ghent. Jan Hoet had actually already held a retrospective of the French painter in 1982 at Van Hedendaagse Kunst in Ghent. This was followed by a series of exhibitions in France and abroad, including two major retrospectives at the Musée d'art moderne in Nice in 1993 and at the Düsseldorf Kunstverein in July 2000, three months after the artist's death at his home-cum-studio in Wasquehal, near Tourcoing.

It was in 2008 that the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris also paid tribute to Eugène Leroy, after an initial retrospective twenty years earlier.

One of the key contributions made by the exhibition at the Nathalie Obadia Gallery in Brussels to our understanding of Eugène Leroy is the presentation of 13 of his charcoal drawings. These depict female nudes, a fascinating and yet misunderstood part of the meditative work of Eugène Leroy, who was anxious to capture 'not the resemblance, but on the contrary the indefinite, the enigmatic, the unexpected', to quote Jean Clair<sup>2</sup>.



Eugène Leroy, *Sans Titre*, 1998, 64,7 x 49,8 cm (25 1/2 x 19 5/8 in.)



Eugène Leroy, *Sans Titre*, 1998, Fusain sur papier, 64,7 x 49,8 cm (25 1/2 x 19 5/8 in.)

In paying tribute to one of the greatest French painters of the second half of the 20th century, the Nathalie Obadia Gallery is pursuing its commitment to painting as a medium of tradition and modernity, a direction following on from the shows by Shirley Jaffe and Martin Barré whose recent successes serve to reinforce and encourage the relevance of this choice.

<sup>2</sup> Eugène Leroy, *Eugène Leroy: peinture, lentille du monde*, preface by Jean Clair, publ. Lebeer Hossmann, Brussels, 1979.

# GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

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## BIOGRAPHIE (SÉLECTION)

- 1910 Born on 9 August, Tourcoing, France  
1931 Studies at the School of Fine Arts in Lille and Paris, France  
1936 Awarded the Grand Prix National de la peinture, France  
2000 Dies on 10 May in Wasquehal, France.

## EXPOSITIONS DEPUIS 1980 (SÉLECTION)

- 1982 Retrospective organised by Jan Hoet at the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent, Belgium  
1987 Retrospective at the Musée d'art moderne, Villeneuve d'Ascq, France  
1991 XXI Biennale, Sao Paulo, Brazil  
1992 documenta IX in Kassel (artistic director Jan Hoet), Germany  
1993 Retrospective at the Musée d'art moderne, Nice, France  
Maison de la Culture, Namur, Belgium  
1997 Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, Switzerland  
2000 Retrospective at the Kunstverein, Düsseldorf, Germany  
2001 *Hommage à Eugène Leroy, Musée d'art moderne, Villeneuve d'Ascq, France*  
*Ruprecht Geiger, Eugène Leroy: sunbursts and the Earth's Shelter, Roger Smith Gallery, New York, United States*  
2002 *Eugène Leroy: Nudes, Michael Werner Gallery, New York, United States*  
2003 *CorpoRealities, Rollins College, Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Winter Park, Etats-Unis.*  
2004 *Eugène Leroy : Autoportrait, La Piscine-Musée d'Art et d'Industrie André-Diligent, Roubaix, France.*  
*Eugène Leroy/Jacques Bornibus : Une complicité, la Peinture, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tourcoing, France.*  
2008 *Eugène Leroy, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France.*  
2010 *Eugène Leroy, l'intimité, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille, France*  
*Exposition du Centenaire, MUba I Eugène Leroy, Tourcoing, France*  
2013 *Georg Baselitz – Eugène Leroy : Le récit et la condensation, MUba I Eugène Leroy, Tourcoing, France.*

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**Galerie Nathalie Obadia**  
Brussels

**Eugène Leroy**  
*Peintures & Fusains*  
8 January - 8 March 2014

**Andres Serrano**  
*Cuba*  
13 March - 17 April  
Opening 13 March

**Valérie Belin**  
22 April - 21 June  
Opening 22 April

**Galerie Nathalie Obadia**  
Paris  
Cloître Saint-Merri

**Carole Benzaken**  
*Oui, l'homme est un arbre des champs*  
14 November - 11 January 2014

**Agnès Varda**  
8 February-29 March 2014  
Opening 8 February

**Manuel Ocampo**  
March - May 2014

**Galerie Nathalie Obadia**  
Paris  
Bourg-Tibourg

**Sarkis**  
*Au commencement le blanc*  
9 Janvier - 1 Mars 2014

**Fabrice Hyber**  
*Interdit aux enfants*  
14 March - May 2014  
Opening 14 March