

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS - BRUXELLES

INTÉRIEURS

with works by Eugène Leroy and Sarkis
exhibition curated by Sarkis

January 12th - March 17th, 2018

3, rue du Cloître Saint-Merri, 75004 - Paris



SARKIS, VIDEO STILL FROM *POUR EUGÈNE LEROY, FILM N°171*, 2017
09'09", SHOT ON 17.4.2017 IN SARKIS STUDIO, VILLEJUIF

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is very pleased to present *Intérieurs*, Sarkis's third solo show in Paris following *Il Grido* held in our Brussels gallery in 2016. This time, Sarkis invites Eugène Leroy (1910-2000) in an exhibition he entirely curated to confront his own creations with the master's work he considers absolutely essential. Even though Eugene Leroy has enjoyed a growing recognition on the international contemporary scene over the last 20 years, Sarkis regrets that this genius painter has not yet been claimed as one of the most impacting artistic figures of the 20th century.

In 2012, on the occasion of the retrospective exhibition *Hôtel Sarkis* held at the MAMCO of Geneva, the artist already paid a tribute to nearly 70 artists (architects, writers, moviemakers, painters and composers) among which were John Cage, Andreï Tarkovski, Joseph Beuys, Edvard Munch, Sergueï Paradjanov, Arnold Schönberg and Matthias Grünewald. These "collaborations" ignored the distance between each work anchored in a definite time and space in order to open present time conversations seen as "claimed inspirations and glorified friendships". As complex as a painting by Eugene Leroy, this exhibition gathers a selection of about forty pieces and was conceived as a real "interior" – with a bench, some shelves and glasses of water displayed in every gallery room.

The exhibition starts by tackling the notion of accumulation, which takes up different forms in the work of the two artists. In Eugene Leroy's, it emerges from the stratum of matter added-up on the canvas, alluding to the body of the painter who sculpts figures out of oil paint density. This very same matter, raw and bare, stripped of intrusive foreign bodies, is to be fully seen as a meaningful agglomerate. Real treasures, big *Ikones* that require every bit of the elemental matter of which they are made, these paintings punctuate the space like the milestones and sensorial anchors of Sarkis scenography. Combining the most diverse heritages, from Rembrandt to Malevitch, Giorgione through Jean Fautrier and Vincent Van Gogh, Eugene Leroy explores the many potentialities of the matter while developing a science of the impasto that gives his pieces a unique sculptural dimension.

No rambling either in the accumulation of Sarkis's works from various techniques. *Film N°171 «pour Eugène Leroy»* was produced without editing. In his oil paintings on paper, oil stains spread under our eyes and soak in, progressively altering the surface and color of the work, sculpting it without any notion of a definite timeframe. No artifice or systematism either: everything is benignly and calmly laid down in the diversity of media the artist used for *Intérieurs*. Fingerprinted stained glass, gilded wood, magnetic tapes, neon lights, Kintsugis ceramics, prints on paper, an image from Volker Schlöndorff's movie *The Confusions of Young Törless*, a video painting, Anton Webern's music, copper, dried watercolor, a roll of wrapping paper, wood palettes, lipstick, black tar and pink tulle, a 150 million years-old fossilized stone, a witness of the artist's heart rate, a metallic drawing rack, a writing desk, two Art Nouveau frames with mirrors, a tunic by Japanese stylist Tsumori Chisato, a chain mail, scented oils, china, an African mask, rice, plans of Armenian monasteries and churches from the 8th to the 12th century, watercolor and small *Ikones*.

Like alchemists in their cave-like studios – a place of solitude, peace and concentration (Sarkis even reproduced that of Eugene Leroy in the exhibition), the two artists pay a crucial attention to light as the cornerstone of their representations. Eugene Leroy's painting seems to blur outlines to better drive the attention of he who tries to look and see. As for Sarkis, he builds bridges between various temporalities, cultures and sensibilities: protean installations filled with references that draw connections between the works of the past and today's world. In its own way, both work express a profound humanism, which seems absolutely indispensable in our troubled era.

Eugene Leroy was born in Tourcoing in 1910 and passed away in Wasquehal in 2000.

Despite his much-noticed participations to the Biennale of Sao Paulo in 1990 and the Documenta of Kassel in 1992, his work has long remained little known due to its singularity. Since the beginning of the 2000s, he has enjoyed a new consideration from institutions, the art market and a new generation of artists, the firsts of which being German painter Georg Baselitz, who contributed to the renewed interest in Leroy's work.

Born in 1910, Eugene Leroy dedicated all his free time to practicing drawing and painting. He discovered oil painting in 1927, which he defined as the "*door toward a desire for happiness*". He pursued this "*painting quest*" every day in his studio practice. In 1931, he started brief art studies at the fine art school of Lille, before continuing them in Paris. He got married in 1933 and moved near Roubaix in 1935, where he taught Greek and Latin while painting. Eugene Leroy's first exhibition took place in 1937 at the Galerie Montsalut of Lille. In 1943, he met art critic Gaston Diehl who organized his first exhibition in Paris.

Between 1946 and 1948, he worked on a mural painting of almost 27m² entitled *Crucifixion* for the chapel of Notre Dame des Victoires de Roubaix high school. In 1951, he met art dealer Pierre Loeb who bought him a dozen paintings. The following year, he travelled in Italy and Germany. In 1954, he exhibited in Paris with Sam Francis, Serge Poliakoff and Marcel Pouget at the Galerie Art Vivant. In 1956, he enjoyed his first exhibition at the Museum of Tourcoing, then at the Museum of Dunkirk in 1957, and received the Emile-Otho Friesz prize. In 1959, Eugene Leroy made stained-glass windows for the church of Notre-Dame-des-Flots in Dunkirk, and then exhibited his works at the Galerie Claude Bernard from 1961 to 1963. This was where Georg Baselitz discovered and started collecting his work. Eugene Leroy started engraving in 1964, while his first gouaches and acrylics on paper date back from 1967. He took part in the Salon de May from 1956 to 1970 in Paris and to the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles twice, in 1973 and 1976. In 1972, the work of Mark Rothko made a great impression on him during his trip to New York and Washington. In 1977, François Mathey exhibited Leroy's work at the fine arts school of Lille. The K Gallery of Washington (USA) also showcased his paintings as well as the Van Heidenhaage Kunst Museum of Ghent in Belgium, in 1982. German gallery owner Michael Werner, a friend and art dealer of the German painters Baselitz and Markus Lüpertz, became his agent and organized exhibitions for him in Germany, Austria, Belgium, Greece and the United States.

Eugene Leroy's last ten years – from 1990 to 2000- were crucial, for the artist saw his work gain international recognition thanks to a retrospective show held at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in 1988, as well as his participation in the Biennale of Sao Paulo in 1990 and the Documenta of Kassel in 1992, all the while continuing to go his own way on the fringe of the mainstream movements of the time. Two major retrospective exhibitions followed at the MAMAC of Nice in 1993 and the Kunstverein of Düsseldorf in July 2000, three months after the artist had passed away in his studio-home of Wasquehal.

He also took part in the Venice Biennale of 1995 and received the Grand prix national de Peinture in 1996. In 2010, following a major donation from the artist's sons, the MUba-Eugène Leroy of Tourcoing organized *L'Exposition du Centenaire*, the biggest retrospective show ever dedicated to the artist, along with the publishing of a reference monographic book, and, in 2013, the *Georg Baselitz-Eugène Leroy: le récit et la condensation* exhibition, a great success among critics and the general audience.

Eugene Leroy's works are featured in many prestigious private and public collections in France and abroad, such as the Stedelijkmuseum (Amsterdam, Netherland), the Smithsonian Institution, the Hirshhorn Museum and sculpture garden (Washington D.C, USA), the Kunsthalle of Basel (Switzerland), the Berardo Museum (Lisbon, Portugal), the Ludwig Museum (Cologne, Germany), the Albright-Knox Art Gallery (Buffalo, New York, USA), the Van Abbe Museum (Eindhoven, Netherland), the Staedel Museum (Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany), the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Humlebaeck, Denmark), the Kunsthalle of Karlsruhe (Germany), the Rennie Collection (Vancouver, Canada), the Ploner collection (Vienna, Austria) ; the Maeght Foundation (Saint-Paul de Vence), the Pompidou Center (Paris), the City of Paris Museum of Modern Art (Paris), the FNAC (Paris), the FRAC Nord Pas-de-Calais (Auvergne, Ile de France), the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Toulouse and the Museum of Fine Arts of Lyon.



EUGÈNE LEROY, *GRANDES FIGURES, L'ÉTÉ*, 1990
OIL PAINTING ON CANVAS, 130 X 195 CM

Born in 1938 in Istanbul, Turkey, Sarkis has been living and working in Paris since 1964.

Sarkis studied French, painting and interior design before moving to Paris in 1964. In 1967, he won the Biennale of Paris Painting Prize. The same year, Sarkis exhibited *Connaissez-vous Joseph Beuys ?* at the Salon de Mai in reference to the German artist he considers to be the most important of our time. In 1969, he was invited by art critic Harald Szeemann to take part in the now famous exhibition *When attitudes become form* at the Kunsthalle of Bern. Since he also deeply cares about transfer of knowledge, he ran the art department of the School of Decorative Arts of Strasbourg from 1980 to 1990, and worked as a seminar director at the Institut des Hautes Etudes en Arts Plastiques (IHEAP) created by Pontus Hulten from 1988 to 1995.

His work has been exhibited in prestigious international institutions among which the Pompidou Center (France), the Guggenheim Museum (USA), the Istanbul Modern (Turkey), the City of Paris Museum of Modern Art (France), the Kunst-und-Ausstellungshalle of Bonn (Germany), the Louvre (France), the Bode Museum (Germany), the Kunsthalle of Bern (Switzerland), and the Kunsthalle of Düsseldorf (Germany). His work was also featured in major art events like the Documenta VI and VII (Germany), the Venice Biennale (Italy) and the Biennales of Sydney (Australia), Shanghai (China), Sao Paulo (Brazil), Moscow (Russia) and Istanbul (Turkey). In 2015, he represented Turkey at the 56th Venice Biennale, and took part in the exhibition held at the pavilion of the Republic of Armenia, which won the Golden Lion.

In France, Sarkis has enjoyed many major solo shows notably at the Musée du Château des Ducs de Wurtemberg (Montbéliard) in 2014, at the Château d'Angers in 2012, at the Château de Chaumont-sur-Loire in 2011, au Centre Pompidou (Paris) in 2010, 1993 and 1979, the Bourdelle Museum, the Louvre Museum and the Maison Rouge (Paris) in 2007, the Picasso Museum (Paris) in 2003, the Museum of Contemporary Art of Lyon, the Museum of Modern Art of Céret, the ENSBA of Paris in 2002, the CAPC-Bordeaux in 2000 and 1976, the Museum of Modern and Contemporary

art of Strasbourg in 1998 and 1988, the Fine Arts Museum of Nantes in 1997, the Magasin de Grenoble in 1991, the ENSA of Limoges in 1986, the New Museum of Villeurbanne in 1985, the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in 1984, the Museum of Art and Industry of Saint-Etienne in 1974, the Galliera Museum (Paris) in 1973, and the City of Paris Museum of Modern Art in 1970 with Christian Boltanski.

In *Passages*, the exhibition held at the Centre Pompidou in 2010, Sarkis opened a dialogue with the works of Kasimir Malevich, the wall of Andre Breton's studio as well as the work *Plight* by Joseph Beuys, one of Sarkis's tutelary figures -along with filmmaker Andreï Tarkovski, which movie the artist revisited in Brancusi's studio. These works allude to the artist's *KRIEGSSCHATZ* (war treasure) and consist of found objects: artworks or ethnographic objects from various civilizations. In 2011, the MAMCO of Geneva held a major retrospective show of his work entitled *Hôtel Sarkis*. This four-stories exhibition gathered 200 pieces from 1971 to 2011 and gave an overview of the artist's wide range of practices, deepening the impact of a work full of echoes to other creators. Invited by the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum of Rotterdam in 2012, he exhibited *Ballads* in the 5000m² of the Submarine Wharf, was showcased by the Château de Chaumont sur Loire, the same year - in response to a commission from the Région Centre - and during the *Intense Proximité* Triennial of the Palais de Tokyo. In 2013, Sarkis took part in *When attitudes become form, Bern 1969/Venice 2013* on the occasion of the 55th edition of the Venice Biennale at the Prada Foundation. He presented *Passages Croisés en or* at the Castle of Angers; was invited to exhibit his *Frise de Guerre* at the MONA - Museum of Old and New Art in Tasmania, and took part in *Ici, Ailleurs* on the occasion of Marseille - Provence, European Capital of Culture, as well as to the *Modernity? Perspectives from France and Turkey* exhibition held at the Istanbul Modern. In 2014, he exhibited at the Huis Marseille Museum voor Fotografie of Amsterdam. His works were featured at the CIAC, the MNAC and the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant in Bucharest (Romania) at the same time as a monographic exhibition was held at the Museum du Château des ducs de Wurtemberg (Montbéliard). In 2015, he represented Turkey at the Venice Biennale and took part in *Armenity* at the Pavilion of the Republic of Armenia, which won the Golden Lion. He also enjoyed a monographic exhibition at the Boghossian Foundation of Brussels, and exhibited at the MAXXI in Rome. In 2016, his work was showcased at the Grand Palais, the Singapore Museum, the Muba Tourcoing and the CaixaForum of Barcelona in addition to a monographic exhibition at the Zacheta Museum of Warsaw in 2017. In the summer 2018, the Pêcheries, Musée de Fécamp has invited him for its reopening.

Sarkis's works are featured in many internationally-renowned public collections in France and abroad, such as the Landes Museum (Germany), the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum (Netherlands), the MAMCO (Switzerland), the Museu Serralves (Portugal), the Istanbul Modern (Turkey), the ZKM (Germany); the Pompidou Center, the City of Paris Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of the Castle of the Dukes of Württemberg, the Museum of Modern Art of Saint-Étienne, the Museums of the City of Strasbourg, the CAPC of Bordeaux, the Museum of Contemporary Art of Lyon, the MAC/VAL, the Fine Arts Museum of Nantes, the LAM, the Castle of Chaumont-sur-Loire, the IAC of Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes, the FRAC of Loire, Poitou-Charentes, Brittany, Alsace, Auvergne, Lorraine, Aquitaine, Franche-Comté, Languedoc-Roussillon, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Ile-de-France, the CNAP as well as the Departmental Collection of Seine-Saint-Denis (France).

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