

PRESS KIT



Lucien COUTAUD. *Le Maître du Surréal* *Une collection particulière*

June 7 – July 6, 2023

Opening : Wednesday June 7, 2023

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- A private collection -

It is a pleasure to pay tribute to the painter Lucien Coutaud through the collection of Maryvonne and Jean Binder. The Galerie des Modernes will present about 40 paintings by the artist from the 1930s to the 1970s.

My partner Philippe Bismuth and I have known Maryvonne and Jean Binder for many years and had the opportunity to organise a retrospective exhibition "Tribute to Lucien Coutaud" with them in 2004 at the exhibition hall of the Louvre des Antiquaires in Paris.

Jean Binder, specialist and author of numerous works on Lucien Coutaud, including the catalogue Raisonné of the artist's paintings, gouaches and tapestries, is inexhaustible on the life and work of the painter. He is responsible for more than twenty exhibitions of Lucien Coutaud's work in various museums and galleries.

When Maryvonne asked me about the origin of their passion for Lucien Coutaud, she confided that it all began in 1973 during a visit to Félix Labisse's house where, admiring a painting by Coutaud, Labisse suggested that they get to know the artist. The first meeting was memorable: Maryvonne's cape had indeed caused a vase in Lucien and Denise Coutaud's flat to wobble and shatter. From this anecdote their friendship was born. The following year, in 1974, Maryvonne and Jean Binder began to collect Lucien Coutaud's works.

This collection, which has been built up over the last forty years, includes a significant number of carefully selected works from all periods.

The exhibition *Lucien Coutaud, le Maître du Surréal. Une collection particulière* will give the opportunity to discover or to deepen his enigmatic work.

On this occasion, a catalogue will be published by the Association Lucien Coutaud (ALC).

Vincent Amiaux

- Lucien Coutaud in a few words -

"Debris of dreams, fragments of reality, mixed with the visions of a poet, such is the continuity of the work of Lucien Coutaud" (Jean Binder).

A protean and prolific French painter, Lucien Courtaud (Meynes, 1904 - Paris, 1977) explored numerous fields of creation such as painting, drawing, engraving, tapestry, theatre sets and costumes...

After studying at the Beaux-Arts in Nîmes, he experimented with the academies in Paris. In the artistic ferment of the capital, he became friends with Jean Cocteau, Jacques and Pierre Prévert, Paul Éluard, Pablo Picasso, Jean-Paul Sartre, Boris Vian, ...

Master of the "Surreal" according to his own terms, Lucien Coutaud is a painter of enigma, mystery, and dreams that sometimes flirt with nightmares. The representation of the human being, and especially of the universal woman, is one of the fundamental themes of his creation.

Around 1930, his vision of the human being is at first evanescent, ghostly like a memory, then in the second half of the 1930s, it becomes more precise, narrative, decorative. In the 1940s, his characters become thorny, disturbing, distressing, like the praying mantis. From the 1950s onwards, rebus characters with fragmented limbs appear.

His approach focuses on probing the torments of the soul, through hybrid creatures made up of human and animal bodies, or plants or architecture, which will never cease to metamorphose and evolve in a complex and poetic imaginary world.

Eroticism, charged with the deepest emotions and desires, also plays a major role in Coutaud's work.

His art, essentially dreamlike, oscillates between Surrealism and the phantasmagorical. The writer and poet who co-founded Surrealism, Philippe Soupault, commented: *"Coutaud proposes a world that is close to that of dreams"*.

His vision, both intriguing and sometimes disturbing, makes him a singular and unique artist and as Christophe Dauphin writes: *"Lucien Coutaud's work is a mythology that stems from a world deeply rooted in the painter's memory and imagination"*.

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« ... I take refuge in my dream. I take refuge in my painting, in my drawings, in my engravings: it's an excellent refuge, it's a very good cave. You can still breathe, but you are sheltered from the rain, the cold, life. But I still participate, of course. I love the rain [...] When I work, I see the water falling on the sea. The water from the sky washes everything away. All that's left is eroticism, dreams, death, everything that tempts me. »

Lucien Coutaud

- Some paintings from the exhibition -



Femme à la bicyclette, 1931

Oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm

©Maryvonne Binder / Les petits frères des Pauvres

Jean Cocteau, friend and "discoverer" of Lucien Coutaud wrote: "The water he bottles remains blue, even in small doses. It is the sign of the poets."

« For Coutaud, the 1930s were the years of the temptation of surrealism. It was only a temptation, as his universe was, as he put it, "surreal", and was developed under the sign of dreams, the marvellous and the erotic. » Jean Binder



Nature morte en ville, 1940

Oil on panel, 46 x 55 cm

©Maryvonne Binder / Les petits frères des Pauvres

« As early as 1940, we can see in his paintings the beginnings of a profound change in his art and his way of painting, which will soon become very obvious. First of all, we see his fruits in town, with the first sliced fruits and one or more knives at their side.

The painter with the sharp name (a play on words of Coutaud) undoubtedly plays with homophony.. » Jean Binder



La demoiselle des fers, 1945

Oil on canvas, 82 x 55 cm

©Maryvonne Binder / Les petits frères des Pauvres

In 1944, the artist transposed this very troubled period of the Occupation into his painting.

« His world becomes dark, disturbing, aggressive, marked by the influence of the works of Franz Kafka. » Jean Binder



Place du matador, 1954

Oil on canvas, 38 x 46 cm

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The year 1954 was the year of Lucien Coutaud's great compositions such as *Éroticomagie* showing half-women and half-swans on the beach with a predella reminiscent of the erotic, unusual and imaginary universe of Hieronymus Bosch.

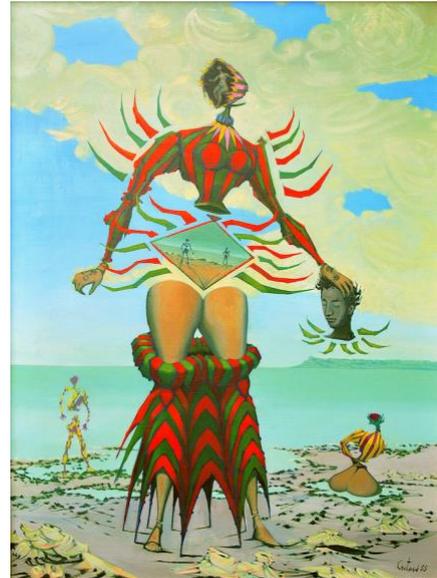
This is also the year of the *Corrida Eroticomagique*, from the former collection of the Viscountess Marie Laure de Noailles in Paris. In this painting, as in ours, the bull is composed of intertwined human bodies that may evoke Arcimboldo's mannerist paintings.

En souvenir d'un peintre, 1955

Oil on canvas, 74 x 54 cm

©Maryvonne Binder / Les petits frères des Pauvres

Important composition showing a figure half woman, half mannequin, holding in his hand the head of the poet Yves Tanguy, who died on 15 January of the same year. Coutaud admired Tanguy, whom he met several times. This painting was presented at the exhibition *Hommage à Yves Tanguy* organised from June to August 1955 at the Galerie Rive Gauche, Paris.



Elles viennent à marée basse, 1959

Oil on canvas, 19 x 26 cm

©Maryvonne Binder / Les petits frères des Pauvres

In 1959, Coutaud developed a new theme, *Les Femme Fleurs*, composed of pansies and irises on a seascape background. "These are flowers that he [Coutaud] can pick from his garden at the "Cheval de Brique". It's as simple as that, even if we can point out that we are in this place, between Trouville and Honfleur, on the Côte Fleurie [Flowery Coast] ". J. Binder "On the beaches, women whose faces are flowers dance a mysterious ballet on the threshold of a dewy dawn as tender as a memory." Jean Bouret



La plage du Cheval de Brique, 1970

Oil on canvas, 73 x 92 cm

©Maryvonne Binder / Les petits frères des Pauvres

In 1953, Coutaud moved to Villerville in Normandy, to a house overlooking the beach, which he called the "Cheval de Brique" (Brick horse). Captivated by the unusual beauty of the site, the movements of the tides and the strange climatic variations, this place would be his last great source of inspiration until the end of his life.

Painted on 18 July 1970, this composition is part of a series of works presenting characters that are half women, half beach huts.