



Bernard Buffet

1928-1999

The Brooklyn Bridge

Oil on canvas signed and dated 1958 upper center

Dimensions : 198 x 134 cm

Dimensions : 77.95 x 52.76 inch



Dimensions with frame : 228 x 164 cm
Dimensions with frame : 89.76 x 64.57 inch

The architecture is the real subject of this painting, which is not disturbed or animated by any living being. The neutral background used by the painter accentuates the lines of the buildings whose verticality is obvious at first glance. The format further reinforces the power of the city whose monumentality seems to crush us. Bernard Buffet has always painted deserted cities, as if to make us reflect on our human condition.

Dated 1958, this painting was part of the New York exhibition in February 1959 at the Galerie David et Garnier. This was the year of his first series of works dedicated to New York City.

Of the works in this exhibition, two are now in the Bernard Buffet Museum in Japan, and three have joined the Ise Collection, also in Japan.

Our painting was bought by Michel Pastor in 1975 from the Galerie Maurice Garnier. Michel Pastor (1943 - 2014)

was a great collector of ancient art, 18th century French furniture and also contemporary art. This painting was the first in his collection. He never parted with it.

Biography

Bernard Buffet, described as the genius of the 20th century, aroused the interest and passion of the public worldwide by describing the anxiety and emptiness of the post-war period through his very personal use of black lines and sober colours.

From his earliest childhood, the artist developed a passion for drawing and painting. At the age of 15 he successfully passed the entrance exam to the ENSBA in Paris and joined Pierre Narbonne's studio.

A precocious artist, he made his debut in 1946 at the "salon des moins de 30 ans" with a self-portrait and exhibited the following year at the salon des indépendants. In December 1947, he had his first exhibition presented by Pierre Descargues at the Librairie des Impressions d'Art organised by Guy Weelen and Michel Brient. At the age of 20, the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris bought him "Nature morte au poulet".

He was soon introduced to collectors by the painter Jean Aujame. In 1948, a great collector of contemporary art, Doctor Maurice Girardin, was fascinated by the artist's work and bought a first work, then sixteen others between 1948 and 1953. In the same year, Buffet obtained an exclusive contract in the famous gallery of Emmanuel David and Armand Drouant. This contract will be shared with Maurice Garnier because Armand Drouant did not appreciate Bernard Buffet's painting.

From 1949, Bernard Buffet exhibited every year at the Galerie Drouant-David, and decided in 1951 to make a theme for each exhibition to avoid repeating himself.

Bernard Buffet's personality was revealed at the end of the 1940s with his first angular characters and his incisive drawings in which one can read the pathos and anguish which will classify him in the expressionist miserabilist movement of Francis Gruber and Georges Rouault.

Success was dazzling. Bernard Buffet received numerous awards, including the "Prix de la Critique" at the age of 20, ex æquo with Bernard Lorjou, and in 1952 the Antral prize. Then in 1955, the young painter was named best post-war French artist by the magazine *Connaissance des Arts*. At the beginning of the 1950s, Bernard Buffet met Pierre Bergé, with whom he would share eight years of his life. They stayed with Jean Giono in Manosque before renting a small house next door where the artist set up a studio until 1954. He led a modest life, nevertheless rich in creation and encounters: Giono and Aragon were part of the painter's daily life. Behind his air of a man of few words and anxious, Bernard Buffet was always very well surrounded and shared deep friendships with the great intellectual figures of the time.

In 1954, Maurice Garnier opened the Bernard Buffet Gallery at 12 Avenue de Matignon in Paris. The gallery owner will spend the rest of his life defending the work of Bernard Buffet. In the 50s and 60s, the artist was at his peak. The Bernard Buffet style became so popular that Monsignor Pasquale Macchi, secretary to Pope Paul VI, asked the artist to donate paintings to the Vatican. Bernard Buffet then gave up a set of paintings representing the Passion of Christ created in 1961 and which was to decorate the chapel of his property at Château l'Arc, acquired in 1956.

In 1958, a first retrospective exhibition was devoted to the artist at the Galerie Charpentier, where 100 paintings were shown. The exhibition was a success, yet the art critics were increasingly harsh with the artist, whose commercial success and public recognition they did not appreciate. However, Maurice Garnier was aware of the genius of the artist, whose reputation was now international, as he was exported to the United States, Russia and even Japan.

That same year marked a turning point in Buffet's life when, during a stay in Saint Tropez, he met Annabel Schowb. It was love at first sight. The painter was fascinated by the fertility of Annabel's talent. Her writings were compared to those of Françoise Sagan, to whom she was close, and when she sang, the comparison was made with Juliette Gréco. It was at this time that Bernard Buffet began to move away from his deliberately monotonous palette to use a wide variety of colors. From then on, his paintings also became more cheerful. Annabel remained his muse all his life, to whom he dedicated the exhibition "Thirty times Annabel" in 1961.

Regardless of the critics, Bernard Buffet created his own path and his conception of painting led him to the heights of fame and made him one of the greatest expressionist painters of his time. His success will never be denied. He has exhibited all over the world and is one of the best-known expressionist artists. So much so that a museum dedicated entirely to Bernard Buffet was opened in 1973 in Japan. This museum was initiated by Kiichiro Okano, a Japanese banker who was passionate about Buffet's work. His passion for the artist's pictorial style dates back to 1963 when the painter's retrospective exhibition was held in Tokyo and then in Kyoto at the Museum of Modern Art. The pure and incisive style and the technique that emphasizes space in Buffet's paintings is similar to the Japanese printmaking tradition. For several years, the founder of the museum acquired about ten paintings per year.

Elected to the Academy of Fine Arts in 1974, Bernard Buffet became then the youngest academician. Diminished by Parkinson's disease, he committed suicide on 4 October 1999 in his studio in Tourtour in the Var.

The Museum of Modern Art in Paris organised a Bernard Buffet's retrospective at the end of 2016 and beginning of 2017, as well as the Museum of Montmartre, where Bernard Buffet lived for several years.

His work is singular and imbued with a striking sadness. Grey, wrinkled, emaciated figures, desolate landscapes, his creations are strong, poignant, and his art is percussive, sharp and nervous.

Museums

Musée d'art Roger-Quilliot, Clermont-Ferrand

Musée Estrine, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence

Musée Bernard Buffet , Japon

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