



Olivier Debré

1920-1999

Red 76

Oil on canvas / signed and titled on the back

Dimensions : 116,5 x 73 cm

Dimensions : 45.67 x 28.74 inch



Biography

Oliver Debré started to draw, paint and sculpt at the age of 14. Of course, he has been influenced by the painter Edouard Debat-Ponsan, his grand-father, who realized impressionist landscapes. In 1938, he entered the Fine Arts school in the architecture class directed by his uncle Charles Maresquier. Then he became the pupil of Le Corbusier. The young 20 years Olivier Debré was well integrated among the Parisian artistic sphere. He met Picasso in 1941 during an exhibition of his works at the Gallery Georges Aubry. Then he frequently went to the studio of the master of whom work had great influence on the young painter. From this point forward, he tried to express his emotion without making a representation of reality. His architect training provided him to make strong compositions and his works turned to abstraction. Abstract art allowed him to show his feeling and mind. For him, symbols are reality. He met avant-gardist painters like Pierre Soulages, Serge Poliakoff and Nicolas de Staël. His painting Sign of black fervor (1944) shows the transition from figuration to abstraction in his work.

In 1949, his first solo show took place at the Gallery Bing. His brightly-coloured and expressive paintings were well noticed by art critic. Olivier Debré was close to many artists of his time, like Gérard Schneider, Deyrolle, Dewasne, Michel Atlan and Hans Hartung. He opted for rich material and gloomy colors in the 1950's. Always carried by the idea of the signal as a representation of his mind, he painted large size sign-persons that can especially be seen in his ink drawings. Although this set of paintings has been the result of his own researches, they can easily be compared to the works of Nicolas de Staël in the technique of palette knife painting.

At the turn of the 1960's, he changed his technique after he met Kline, Rothko and Olitski - the masters of abstract expressionism - in the US. He painted large size landscape paintings by using a sort of broomstick-paintbrush on the canvas put directly on the floor. His intervention on pictorial space exalted color; material was put in ample monochromic waves, with punctuation of thick and colored concretions that defined and created space. Olivier Debré was a wonderful colourist.

His painting changed to a spaciality that reflected freedom and impermanence of nature. He described it as fervent abstraction because it symbolized the emotion provoked by the contemplation of landscape. Most of the time he painted outside, in countryside and wanted to eliminate the distance between perception and transcription. By the titles of his works, Oliver Debré revealed the localization of his landscapes : Toledo View, 1958; Jerusalem pink ochre, 1972; Madurai pink, vivid mark, India 1989; Pale pink of Teotihuacan, Mexico, 1997.

In 1967, Debré represented France at the Universal Exhibition of Montreal. During the 1970's he travelled a lot, especially in Norway, always searching for new landscapes. From 1980 to 1985, he has been a teacher at the Fine Arts School in Paris. At this time and also in the 1990's, he had many public orders. The most important one in France was the stage curtain of the Comédie Française inaugurated in 1987. The Louis Vuitton foundation ordered him a stage curtain for the Hong Kong's opera house in 1989 and he also created another one for the Shanghai's in 1998. He realized some frescoes for the Abbesses Theater in Paris and created stamps as well as stained glasses. In 1995, the Jeu de Paume Museum presented a retrospective of his work that was shown afterwards in Europe and South America. In 1997, he did the sets and costumes for the ballet "Signes" by Carolyn Carlson who chose Olivier Debré's painting as the theme of her performance.

At the same time, he made sculptures and also illustrations for many books by Michel Déon, Julien Gracq, Francis Ponge and Edmond Jabes. He published some artistic essay and proposed a new idea of architecture adapted to contemporary city. In 1999, he was elected as a member of the Institut in painting section only two months before his death.

Museums

Aalborg, Amman, Antibes, Bordeaux, Boston, Brest, Buffalo, Caen, Cardiff, Châteauroux, Cincinnati, Colmar, Copenhague, Dunkerke, Evreux, Grenoble, Le Havre, Houston, Jérusalem, Lausanne, Les Sables-d' Olonne, Liège, Lyon, Marseille, Metz, Montréal, Nantes, New Delhi, Oslo, Paris, Perpignan, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Saint Etienne, Strasbourg, Toulouse, Tours Washington...

Bibliography

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Olivier Debré, par Olivier Debré et Emmanuel Pernoud (1995).

L'espace et le comportement, par Olivier Debré (1990).

L'oeuf dans le chocolat, par Olivier Debré (1997).

La marche de Mme Ouvrard, par Olivier Debré (1996).

Olivier Debré, Peintures. Catalogue de l'Exposition Debré, Galerie Louis Carré & Co, Mai 2003.

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