

WILLOW GALLERY



Le Port de Beaulieu

Bernard Buffet (1928 - 1999)

Oil on canvas, signed and dated 1957.

Canvas size: 35 x 46in / 89 x 116cm

Frame size: 45.5 x 56.5in / 116 x 143cm

PROVENANCE

E. David et M. Garnier, Paris.

Niveau Gallery, New York.

Private collection, Japan.

LITERATURE

This painting is sold with a photo-certificate of authenticity from the Maurice Garnier Galerie, Paris

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Bernard Buffet was a French artist, working as a painter, lithographer, etcher, designer and sculptor. His paintings covered a wide range of subjects, including landscapes, portraits and still-life and religious scenes.

Buffet was born in Paris and an early recognition of his drawing talent earned him a place at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1944 at the age of sixteen. Within a year he showed his work at the Salon des Moins de Trente Ans. By 1947 he was a member of both the Salon des Indépendants and the Salon d'Automne, and in the same year he shared the Grand Prix de la Critique. By the time he was twenty he was already a highly-acclaimed painter. Defined by elongated, spiky forms, sombre colours, flattened spaces, and an overall mood of sadness and despair, Buffet's early work reflected the misery of post-war France and catapulted him to almost instant success. Indeed, by the early 1950s, he lived in a chateau, enjoyed a life of financial comfort unimaginable just a few short years before, and was rivaled only by Picasso as the most celebrated painter of the modern world. Going against the emerging trend of abstraction, Buffet remained an expressionist through and through, accentuating his non-conformist attitude to painting.

Capitalising on his immense potential, in 1948 Emmanuel David offered Buffet an exclusive contract with his gallery, shared with art dealer Maurice Garnier. This meeting could be considered the turning point in Buffet's career, as it afforded him international recognition. Indeed, his relationship with Maurice Garnier lasted for the rest of his life, comprising no less than fifty-four exhibitions at his gallery, and Garnier continued to work with Buffet's paintings until his own death in early 2014.

Buffet was given first place in a poll in 1955 by the 'Connaissance' journal which listed the ten best postwar artists, and in 1958 was given his first retrospective, at the age of 30. Over the years numerous world-wide exhibitions took place, often following a theme - Bullfighters, Clowns, Religion, Still Life, and others.

In 1961 he painted a series of paintings depicting the life of Jesus Christ, intended to decorate the Chapelle de Chateau l'Arc. Ten years later, at the request of Monseigneur Pasquale Macci (secretary to Pope Paul VI) he offered these paintings to the Vatican Museum where they remain on permanent exhibition.

The patron Kiichiro Okano set up a museum for over a thousand of his works in a park near Mount Fuji in 1973. More than perhaps any other nation, Japan embraced his work, identifying strongly with the flat, graphic elements and pared-down imagery.

In 1974 he was admitted to the Académie des Beaux Arts and appointed officer of the Légion d'honneur.

The artist's work consists of more than 8000 paintings as well as numerous printed graphics. He also worked as an illustrator and stage

designer. In 1999 Buffet, who suffered from Parkinson's Disease and was no longer able to work, committed suicide in his house in Tourtour. Bernard Buffet's paintings could be said to be a reflection of his own personality: individualistic, elegant, sober, solitary, and melancholy. The harsh and gothic lines which give his work such starkness and tension make it atmospheric, powerful, and instantly recognisable.

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Monday - Friday 9:30am - 6pm or by appointment

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