

BERNARD CATHELIN: Biography

Bernard Cathelin (20 May 1919 – 17 April 2004) was a French painter born in Paris and a member of the School of Paris which included Picasso, Chagall, Matisse, Dufy (among others), as well as Maurice Brianchon, who was Cathelin's teacher at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs. He received critical acclaim in 1950 after an exhibition in New York. Cathelin received an international following throughout Europe, the Americas and Asia. Cathelin was not a prolific painter. He often painted oil on paper studies, many of which later became the subject matter for oil on canvas works. Cathelin also had a tendency to re-work paintings. This penchant for re-working led to a smaller number of finished paintings being released from the studio perhaps as few as 18 to 25 works in a particular year.

Famous for oil paintings with a rich impasto surface and vivid colour, the three favorite themes in Cathelin's work are still life, landscapes and portraits of women. Cathelin also produced hundreds of lithographs over the years collaborating with the four generation printing house Mourlot Atelier in Paris, established in 1852. Mourlot worked with many of Europe's most significant artists including Matisse, Picasso, Braque, Leger, Raoul Dufy, Miro, Le Corbusier and Yves Klein, among so many others. It was actually Henri Matisse who introduced Cathelin to Mourlot when Cathelin was asked to assist in producing the poster for the jubilee celebration of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs.

Cathelin traveled extensively around the world and was featured in over 50 exhibitions internationally, from Europe and the Americas, to Russia, Japan, India and South-East Asia. His travels were a source of inspiration for his creations although he always returned (physically and artistically) to the landscapes of the Drôme and neighbouring Provence regions of France. Throughout his life, he maintained a deep-rooted love for his country and especially for his ancestral home in the Drôme region.

Elected to the Legion of Honour by the French President of the Republic, Francois Mitterrand in 1995, the Musée de Valence mounted a retrospective of his work in the summer of 1997. This exhibition, by drawing local and worldwide visitors, established a new attendance record for the museum. In 2000, the Shanghai Art Museum in China organised a retrospective exhibition presenting 40 years of Bernard Cathelin's works. Bernard Cathelin died on 17 April 2004.