



Press release

Art Basel / Art Feature 2012

Bernard Buffet: La Mort

From 14 June 2012 to 17 June 2012



Press Release

Bernard Buffet

“La Mort” (Death)

(Artistic testament of the artist)

Few artists have been both adored and despised as much as Bernard Buffet. At the end of the Second World War and for the subsequent 15 years, he was the young French painter with an unparalleled critical and commercial success. His existential miserabilism and pictorial originality found acclaim throughout the art field both in Europe and the rest of the world. His exhibitions provoked riots, people asked for his autograph; his paintings were more expensive than those of Picasso in the same period. He was a real phenomenon.

Between the 60s and 70s and for various reasons, such as the arrival of new artistic movements, the criticisms pertaining to his commercial success, the denigration by the French cultural institutions, the exposure of a lifestyle that holds little in common with his miserabilist topics, but also the hostile attitude of Bernard Buffet toward all forms of progress in art, the enthusiastic consensus about the work of Bernard Buffet is transformed into a hatred of the most unjust kind.

As if ashamed of its premature enthusiasm, the world of art suddenly turns its back on this artist who has become too productive too fast and in too inconsistent a way. This leads to periods of depression, doubt and alcoholism which force him, despite the still on-going commercial success, to cross a long creative desert.

From 1985 until his death in 1998, a new artistic period opens for Bernard Buffet. His later work seems to have found a new level of creativity, a new life, a higher sense of freedom and irony. It is as if the artist, after having exorcised his demons, still wanted to prove to the world that he was a great painter, able to renew himself and surprise his audience.

In 1998, Bernard Buffet is diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and learns he is condemned, in the more or less long term, to not being able to paint any more. This man who lived only for his painting at a rate of 8 hours a day, 7 days a week, can no longer stand the prospect of living. He locks himself in his studio for 6 months and compulsively paints a series of 25 paintings on the theme of death. Twenty five sumptuous life-size *écorchés* in renaissance attire. The style is different from his other paintings, more nervous, baroque, expressionist, painted with a sense of urgency, with all of his being, his brushes and even his fingers. Once

this artistic testament was finished, he put a plastic bag over his head and killed himself by asphyxia. The death of a Samurai

At Art Feature in June 2012, I wish to present a selection of 8 to 12 paintings from the 25 existing pieces in the "Death" series from 1998. Since the death of Bernard Buffet, his work has become the subject of a rediscovery by a new generation of artists, critics, gallery owners and collectors.

Exhibition View



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Exhibition View



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Exhibition View



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Bernard Buffet: La Mort



La Mort [22], 1999

La Mort

Oil on canvas

195 x 114 cm

Unique artwork

Signé

INV Nbr. BB_021



La Mort [11], 1999

La Mort

Oil on canvas

195 x 114 cm

Unique artwork

Signé

INV Nbr. BB_016



La Mort [20], 1999

La Mort

Oil on canvas

195 x 114 cm

Unique artwork

Signé

INV Nbr. BB_020



la Mort [8], 1999
la Mort
oil on canvas
195 x 114 cm
Unique artwork
Signé
INV Nbr. BB_015



La Mort [19], 1999

La Mort

Oil on canvas

195 x 114 cm

Unique artwork

Signé

INV Nbr. BB_019



La Mort [4], 1999

La Mort

Oil on canvas

195 x 114 cm

Unique artwork

Signé

INV Nbr. BB_013



La Mort [24], 1999

La Mort

Oil on canvas

195 x 114 cm

Unique artwork

Signé

INV Nbr. BB_023