

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS



CLAUDE LALANNE
1925-2019

Ben Brown Fine Arts is saddened to announce the passing of seminal artist Claude Lalanne. Best known for her playful works inspired by the natural world and the distinctive wit that animates all her pieces, Lalanne was an endlessly original sculptor with a prestigious career spanning several decades.

Claude enjoyed a longstanding relationship with the gallery and with Ben Brown, who first staged an exhibition of her and her husband's work in 2007. During her lifetime Lalanne went on to achieve iconic status, and critical acclaim for her wonderfully whimsical style, and for her unique marriage of art and design. The last of a generation of avant-garde artists from a pivotal Parisian moment, Claude leaves in her wake a rich creative legacy.

Born in Paris in 1925, Claude (née Dupeux) studied architecture at the École des Beaux-Arts and the École des Arts Décoratifs. After marrying fellow artist François-Xavier Lalanne in the 1960s, the couple became a feature of the creative milieu in Montparnasse: Claude was able to reminisce about their time living next door to Constantin Brancusi, and moving in the same circles as René Magritte and Max Ernst. Together the couple were radical in their combination of modern methods with traditional craftsmanship and their rejection of the customarily distinct categories of fine art and decorative design. Eschewing the dominance of abstraction in post-war Paris, Claude's eye for detail and her love of nature gave birth to her idiosyncratic joyful style.

While Les Lalanne, as they came to be known collectively, shared a creative environment and exhibited together throughout their careers, their oeuvres remained entirely distinct. Claude's delicate flora and fauna inspired pieces reference classical antiquity, and the Baroque, with touches of surrealism. Often moulding organic forms directly from life, Lalanne used electroplating methods combined with traditional casting techniques to create her pieces. A keen horticulturist, Lalanne was inspired by the garden which she carefully cultivated at her home and studio. Her imaginative works created a world of fantasy; she declared *'I dream when I am awake. There is nothing left over by night.'*

Brown first met Claude many years ago and the gallery has hosted seven exhibitions of her work in London and Hong Kong. Speaking of the news he says: *'Today I am immensely saddened to say goodbye to my great friend Claude Lalanne, who over her long career has, along with her late husband François-Xavier, created a lusciously uninhibited world which was very much her own, and to which she welcomed us all. Claude was a visionary whose imagination seemingly knew no bounds and the sensitivity and sense of humour evident in her works has enamoured all that encounter it. I am very proud to have been entrusted with not only her sculptures, but her friendship over the last two decades, and my trips to Paris will not be the same without a delicious lunch in Ury with Claude, surrounded by her garden, her animals, her family and her whimsical ideas realised in gilded bronze. Claude was an unforgettable force and an unforgettable world has been created. She will be greatly missed.'*

Her innovative approach of bringing the natural world into the home earned her a cult-like following which includes Tom Ford, Marc Jacobs, François-Henri Pinault and Bernard Arnault, and notable commissions during her lifetime came from Yves Saint Laurent and Salvador Dalí. Saint Laurent declared: *'what moves me about her, is her ability to unite craftsmanship and poetry with equal depth'*. Her work lives on in many prominent collections around the world, including the National Design Museum, New York; Cooper Hewitt Museum, New York; Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne, Paris; Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris; and the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Following the death of François-Xavier in 2008, Claude continued to work in the home they had shared for over half a century, assisted by her daughter and granddaughter in her later years. Infinitely inventive, Lalanne worked up until her death, and leaves behind a body of work that is at once playful and profound, evocative and elegant. Claude is survived by her daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

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