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Une Bibliothèque des avant-gardes : Paul Destribats (1926-2017) First part : from 1910 to 1945

Paris – The 3, 4 and 5 July 2019



André Breton (1896-1966),
Second manifeste du Surréalisme
Reliure photographique de Paul Bonet
Estimate: €80,000-120,000



Man Ray (1890-1976),
Champs délicieux
Avec toutes les planches signées
Estimate: €200,000-300,000



Paul Eluard (1895-1952) et
Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)
La Barre d'appui
Estimate: €100,000-150,000

Paris – Christie's' Books department is pleased to announce the sale of the collection: *Paul Destribats, Bibliothèque des avant-gardes* in partnership with the experts **Jean-Baptiste de Proyart** and **Claude Oterelo**.

This remarkable collection of books and manuscripts was jealously preserved for sixty years – only a few researchers and close friends had access to it. Some books were regularly lent to institutions. The *Bibliothèque des avant-gardes* comprises 6,000 books, leaflets and manifestos and ephemera from the 20th century. The first three sales, constituting the part 1, include more than 600 lots dating from the 1910s to 1945. They will take place on the 3, 4 and 5 July at Christie's Paris. The entire collection will be sold at Christie's in three sessions, spread over a year, from July 2019 to July 2020.

Jean-Baptiste de Proyart, expert of the sale: "Paul Destribats created his collection as an avant-garde's anthology. It offers multiple collections which would be impossible to reconstitute nowadays. This monumental dispersion over a year in a series of catalogues is, for the world of books and culture, a sensational event, comparable to some of the greatest 19th century's books sales."

Paul Destribats attended high school in Vendôme (Loir-et-Cher) and left for Paris on his bicycle in 1944. In Vendôme in 1943, he discovered Surrealism in a religious school through Georges Hugnet's *La Petite Anthologie du Surréalisme*. He also discovered Lautréamont, Rimbaud and especially André Breton, whose texts never left him. In 1947, he briefly got involved in a political party which he left shortly afterwards. He preferred to go abroad and to become a precious stone broker: South America, United States, Europe...*the great life*.



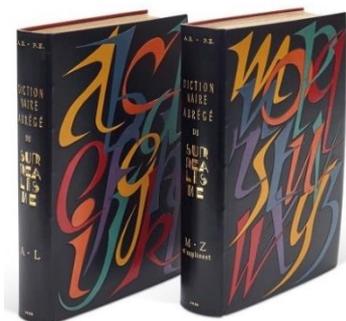
Paul Destribats then opened club in Copacabana, the famous “Club 36” which became a reference for *bossa nova* and contributed to the promotion of his friend and famous musician, Dorival Caymmi. He came back to Paris in the early 1960s and started to take a close look to the avant-garde movements which was expanding around him. This “avant-garde’s buccaneer”, as he was once called by a journalist from *Le Monde*, discovered surrealist magazines at the Brentano’s bookstore and original editions of surrealism at La Hune bookstore, owned by Bernard

Gheerbrant. He immediately began to collect them and became part of the bibliophile world of the 1960s. He then decided to build a collection of avant-gardes dating from 1913 to the 1980s, which would be at the image of a paper museum with the mission of keeping alive the memory of the intellectual and artistic vibrations of a large part of the lively 20th century.

This *Bibliothèque des avant-gardes* brings together all the mediums that books and manuscripts were made of: artists’ books remarkably bounded, surrealist books with frontispieces adorned with radical new images, manifestos and purely poetic and literary books, a superb group of leaflets, *ephemeras* etc. The bindings of these books are most often designed and signed by the greatest French bookbinders of the 20th century: first Georges Leroux, represented through 600 bindings throughout the collection, then Paul Bonet, Pierre-Lucien Martin or Jean de Gonet. In 2005, the *Bibliothèque Kandinsky*, the institutional library of the *Centre Pompidou*, acquired a unique collection of reviews and newspapers (1019 periodicals) from the *Bibliothèque des avant-gardes*. This group was classified National Treasure, and was offered to the French state thanks to the generosity of the Lagardère Group.

A rare fact deserves to be emphasized at the dawn of this remarkable collection’s dispersion. Many of the copies of Paul Destribats collection were loaned to the Centre Pompidou for two major exhibitions: the Spring 2002 exhibition, entitled *La Révolution surréaliste* and organised by Werner Spies which presented 90 books and manuscripts and the exhibition *Dada*, in 2005, curated by Laurent Le Bon, still displayed in the museum which include 230 items.

It is to André Breton that Paul Destribats dedicated most of his means and time. His inner conviction was that there was no modernity or poetic and artistic filiation possible throughout the 20th century without the influence of André Breton and his work. For example, the first book published by André Breton: *Mont de Piété*. We are in 1919. This is a book of fifteen poems. It took fifty years to Paul Destribats to collect the autograph manuscripts of the fifteen poems. No institution in the world has an equivalent. Another highlight of the writer and poet, *L’Air de l’eau*, illustrated by Alberto Giacometti with four original etchings and published in Paris in 1934 by the Cahiers d’Art Editions. A splendid binding by Georges Leroux enhances this poetic celebration of the love felt by André Breton for his wife (illustrated right).



The first three catalogues offer an impressive gallery of André Breton’s great manuscripts, including *Le Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme*, the only autograph manuscript known written in 1938 by André Breton and Paul Eluard. Both volumes were bounded by Paul Bonet in 1963 and were acquired by Paul Destribats in 2005 during the sale of the great collector Daniel Filipacchi’s books collection at Christie’s (estimate: €150,000-200,000). Also, a superb *Nadja* collection of manuscripts and drawings, estimated €40,000-60,000, (Ndr – le prix est faux dans le CP français, mais peu importe) the manuscript of *Position politique du*

surréalisme (1935) (estimate: €60,000-80,000, ill. left), the first draft of the *Anthologie de l'humour noir*, 1937 (estimate: €60,000-80,000) and the manuscript of *La Clé des champs*, 1945 (estimate: €50,000-80,000).

Claude Oterelo, expert of the sale: “Paul was fascinated with Breton’s bravery, intransigence, convictions, a kind of another himself he did not try to imitate but whose poetic universe soften the harsh moments of life. I often told Paul – without any sycophancy – that he was on the top of the books collecting world, but he genuinely did not think so. He just wanted to follow his own way or, as André Breton said, to adjust his walk on the storms’ path”.

Paul Destribats was also particularly fond of Blaise Cendrars and acquired several of his iconic works such as a fascinating copy of *La fin du monde filmée par l'ange de N.D.*, published in 1919 and illustrated by Fernand Léger. It is one of the 25 deluxe copies which is enriched with the proofs of the book comprising the original stencils, realised according to Léger’s drawings. The whole is put together by an impressive embossed binding made by George Leroux (estimate: €40,000-60,000). The collection also includes the most radical text by the poet, *J'ai tué*, the only complete autograph manuscript known. The binding was executed by Georges Leroux and the manuscript is estimate at €60,000-80,000.



Blaise Cendrars
J'ai tué
Estimation : €60,000-80,000



Blaise Cendrars
La prose du transsibérien
Estimation : €200,000-300,000



Blaise Cendrars
La fin du monde filmée par l'ange N.D.
Estimation : €40,000-60,000



Finally, these three auctions will offer the opportunity to the collectors to acquire remarkable books amongst which can be found one of the two only known sets of Man Ray’s *Champs délicieux* with all the photographic plates signed by the artist. Hans Bellmer and his various “dolls”, once again establishes himself as the other creator of unknown images in the interwar’s surrealism. *Die Puppe*, dating from 1934, carries a note to Nusch Eluard – and we are aware today of the role played by Paul Eluard in the recognition of Bellmer’s work in France (estimate: €70,000-100,000). *La Poupée. Seconde partie*, dating from 1935, bounded by Georges Leroux, also carries a note to Paul Eluard (estimate: €70,000-100,000).

La Poupée, from 1936, published by Guy Lévis Mano, carries a also a note to Paul Eluard as well and present two original drawings and an original photograph (estimate: €70,000-100,000).

Auction : Wednesday 3 July at 2:30pm, Thursday 4 July at 3pm and Friday 5 July at 3pm.

Viewing : From Saturday 29 to 3 July from 10am to 6pm. Open on Sunday 30 June from 2pm to 6pm and the 3 July from 10 am to 2pm.

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**Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.*

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