

ST GERMAIN SPACE

## HOMMAGE À AGUAYO

UNTIL JULY 22ND, 2017

*Dear Aguayo,*

*We have come a long way together since that day in 1953 when you arrived at the gallery, 9ter boulevard du Montparnasse. Palazuelo had spoken to Louis Clayeux, then director of the Galerie Maeght, about you, and Clayeux, whose mind and heart were close to what Jeanne Bucher had made him discover, immediately directed you towards those who could understand and value you the most.*

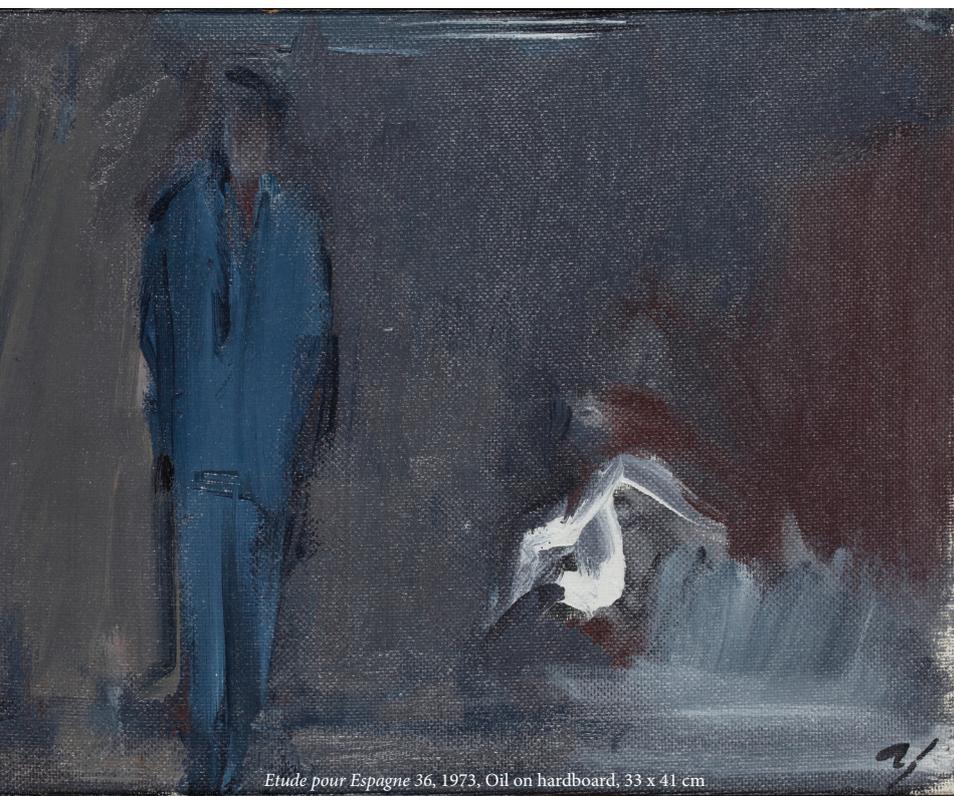
*You came empty-handed and without any florid speech to show yourself to advantage. Your knowledge of the French language was elementary at best, but you already had what the large 1968 self-portrait reveals: the truth of a presence.*

*We met again a few days later in a studio near Saint-Lazare, in front of large, nervous, and intense compositions, with yellow and purple sparkles that vividly invoked the atmosphere of the arenas. It came from Spain, it evoked Spain in a non-illustrative way. Today, still, upon seeing again Fiesta, Parade, or the Corridas series, we are seduced by the dramatization of space expressed in an «abstract» style — musically abstract.*

*Then, upon reflection, and knowing now your first Zaragoza creations like Calavera or Calas negras, it seems obvious to us that your Corridas represented far more than a folkloric evocation or an image of a mythical spectacle. You were sorting out, for yourself and to yourself, a relationship with death, with death's seriousness, with death accepted as a ritual; with inflicted death. For you too, as the poet wrote, «it was 5 o'clock in the afternoon...» You knew the witching hour and the dimension of the silence that went with it. What we discovered in these large, dynamic canvases, what we were unconsciously led to go through, was this load of truth that your modesty refused to name. It disturbed us enough, that day, that we immediately granted you our trust.*

Jean-François Jaeger

JAEGER Jean-François, 2004, in *Aguayo*, Editions Cercle d'Art, Paris.



*Etude pour Espagne 36, 1973. Oil on hardboard, 33 x 41 cm*



*Nu rose, 1962. Oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm*

Born in a village in Old Castile in 1926, Fermín Aguayo experienced at a very young age the pain of the Spanish Civil War. In 1936, after his father and two of his brothers were assassinated, Fermín and his mother succeeded in fleeing. At the end of the '40s, Aguayo became known, through the creation of *Grupo Portico* of Zaragoza, as a pioneer of abstract art in Spain. Aguayo expressed, through his painting, the violence of the situations that he lived through against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War.

Arriving in Paris in 1952, he met Louis Gabriel Clayeux, then director of the Maeght gallery, who introduced him to Jean-François Jaeger. The large canvases of the *Corridas* series — among which the work exposed in the display window, *Cinq heures du soir* (1954) — impressed the young gallery owner, who bought Aguayo's first canvas since he had gone into exile, and decided to represent him. That same year Aguayo met Marguerite, who would remain his companion and model until the end, represented here by *Nu rose* and *Dos*. Twenty-four hours a day she would submit to the very particular rhythm of the painter who was passionate about reading, obeyed only his brushes, preferred to work at night, and prolonged his workday by an hour every day quasi-methodically.

Totally invested in abstraction, he started feeling, from 1955-56 on, that he was no longer evolving. He thus decided to reinvent himself, creating a figurative painting from his abstractions. It became the period of his Castilian «landscapes», represented here by *Amarillo Vertical* or *Composition Brune*, from which the intense Spanish heat emanates.

«My entire abstract period is a reflection on the activity of painting, and it is from that point that I built a figurative style in order to create, for the viewer of the painting, a direct relationship between the real world and painting. The more credible the figuration, the purer the painting...»

*Espagne 36*, represented here by a splendid study, was a unique occasion to create a painting no longer emerging from a feeling but from a sensation. Aguayo represents himself, brush in hand, watching, immobile and powerless, the fall of a pigeon visibly mortally wounded. «It is my only expressionist painting,» he would later say.

As for the *Nocturnes*, a recurring, not to say haunting, theme of his last years, do they not betray, in a highly coded language, his vision of life and death? In painting after painting, in the darkness of the night, humans have become shadows whose shapes now borrow their materiality from the Baroque — the artist's reference to his glorious elders Zurbaran and Velazquez.

**The small paintings, presented here for the first time along with a few bigger ones, pay tribute to the self-taught, solitary and quiet artist. Fermín Aguayo died suddenly in 1977, forty years ago. He left behind a dense, virtuosic oeuvre inhabited by a profound presence and a troubling humanity.**

**The artist's paintings can be found, among others, in the permanent collections of the Museo Reina Sofia, the Museo Patio Herreriano, the Musée Fabre (Montpellier), the Musée Cantini (Marseille), the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon, the CNAP, and the Fondation Planque. The gallery has organized some ten exhibitions of his work.**

**Three of the artist's emblematic works will be shown at the Musée Granet in Aix-en-Provence as part of the exhibition *Passion de l'art - galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger depuis 1925*, from June 24 to September 24, 2017.**