

GALERIE JEANNE-BUCHER

GALERIE JAEGER BUCHER

# Fermin AGUAYO

*Inhabited Presence, Reflected Presence*



*Atelier aux oranges*, 1967-68. Oil on canvas. 74,80 x 114,17 inches. 190 x 290 cm

**Vernissage Thursday 10th May 2012**

Exhibition from 11th May to 13th July 2012

Press contact  
Véronique Jaeger / Camille Nau

*«The center of the world is our own conscience.  
But let's not be philosophical.  
Our only language is Painting (...)  
My intention is not to resemble but to be real,  
not identification but identity.»*

**Fermin Aguayo**



*La chemise cobalt*, 1961. Oil on canvas. 39,37 x 31,50 inches. 100 x 80 cm

# Fermin AGUAYO

## *Inhabited Presence, Reflected Presence*

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### **Vernissage Thursday 10th May 2012**

Vernissage left bank space, 53 rue de Seine, 75006 Paris, 12.pm to 5.pm

Vernissage right bank space at 5 & 7 rue de Saintonge, 75003 Paris  
from 5.30 pm to 8.00 pm

### **Exhibition from 11th May to 13th July 2012**

At both the left bank and right bank spaces of the Gallery

GALERIE JEANNE-BUCHER  
53 rue de Seine 75006 Paris

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5 & 7 rue de Saintonge 75003 Paris

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From 11th May to 13th July 2012 the gallery is pleased to present a retrospective exhibition of the Spanish painter **Fermin Aguayo** entitled ***Inhabited Presence, Reflected Presence*** at both the right bank and left bank spaces of the Gallery.

This **exhibition** retraces the **itinerary** of a great painter who died prematurely in 1977 at the age of 51, and whom the gallery has promoted ever since the 1950s. Following in the footsteps of a retrospective dedicated to him a few years ago by the Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid, it is the first exhibition in France to bring together such a large number of his major works, some of them for the first time. The works exhibited in the historical space of the gallery situated rue de Seine, will provide the public with an overview of the different phases and themes of the artist's lifework, which are developed fully in the continuing exhibition rue de Saintonge, from his earliest paintings of the mid 1940s to the last paintings of 1975, two years before his death. Included in the exhibition are some rare works on paper unseen publicly before.

Born in 1926 in the old Castilian town of Sotillo de la Ribera, Fermin Aguayo's childhood was marked by the horrors of the Spanish Civil War. His father and two brothers were killed by the franquists, while he and his mother fled their home in a state of extreme poverty (his mother was to die of exhaustion a few years later). Silent, discreet and solitary Aguayo is an entirely self-taught (contrarian) who pioneered an abstract style of painting uncommon at that time in Spain (represented by the creation of the **Grupo Portico** of Saragosse in the late 1940s), a style that transposes, in a metaphorical and restrained manner, the violence and dramatic situations of the Civil War.

In his exacting and unpretentious way the artist delves into the formal structures of the paintings of his elders - the geometrical, abstract and figurative aspects of their works as well as the techniques they used - in order to take possession of them, to become one with them, so that through painting the spirit begins to reveal itself in its unique and universal presence.



Opposite : *Molinos*, 1950. Oil on canvas  
33,27 x 20,87 inches. 84,50 x 53 cm

With his move to Paris in 1952 Aguayo began to experiment with a style of painting composed of layers of paint spread more or less thickly on the canvas. In their density, in their evocation of Castilian landscapes and their judicious blending of warm and cool colors - shades of ochre, Sienna pink and earthen browns skillfully orchestrated - these paintings



*Corrida III*, 1954. Oil on canvas.  
19,69 x 25,59 inches. 50 x 65 cm

conjure up the fleshy forms of his native land, as if the artist were seeking to rebirth through them. Little by little, however, the fleshiness gives way to an absence of thickness; and the paintings take on a fluidity, indeed a transparency, as if Aguayo were trying to lay a veil over the landscapes of his childhood, transforming and elevating them into landscapes of the mind.

By distancing himself from his subject matter - a moral and aesthetic attitude he will adopt throughout his work - Aguayo is able to dominate what possesses and animates him. As Jean Planque so aptly describes him, Aguayo is an "*inhabited*" painter, and this quality is palpable in the interiority of his paintings. The inner distance and withdrawal, achieved through the unremitting effort of a painter in search of both himself and of his means of expression, makes possible a return to figuration and inaugurates a way of seeing reality unlike that of any other painter.

Although Aguayo is far removed from the style of his contemporaries Picasso, Balthus or Hélión, he is even further removed from Pop Art and the New Realists. He is neither a figurative nor a descriptive artist but a **painter of perceiving and of presence** who raises consciousness to new heights and thereby **summons up the visible**. Finding no inspiration among his contemporaries, Aguayo began in the 1960s to look back to his venerated masters, those in whom the presence of the painter in painting can be felt: Velasquez first of all, then Rembrandt, Titian, Tintoretto, Ribera, Goya, Manet and Van Gogh. His kinship with these great painters of the past is apparent in the deeply felt sense of reality he shares with them and in the transformation of matter into something like a living presence, as Aguayo would say.

With his acute sense of space, color and light **Aguayo makes the fullness and void** of his paintings vibrate with a universal and mysterious presence: the flat tints of *tierras rosas* reminiscent of his homeland; the fleshy *quarters of beef* hanging weightless in a butcher's stall; the *pigeons* fluttering their wings in a vibrating space; the *dancers* suspended in space between heaven and earth like illuminated *poplars*; the *bathers* floating in space (that is) both aquatic and celestial; the *nudes*, in the image of his wife Marguerite, that stretch into endless landscapes; the numerous portraits of painters, sketched in broad strokes, bathed in a general unity as if to better reveal their denseness and quintessence; the many *nocturnes* that recall a space without gravity; the passers who guide us in a space in which light is master or a hand holding the brush as if an angel were guiding it.



*Grande boucherie*, 1960-61. Oil on canvas  
63,78 x 51,18 inches. 162 x 130 cm



Characters move in and out of the space of his pictures discreetly, silently, bathed in **imperceptible vibrations of light**, as if they were moving in the magic space of *Las Meninas*, on the other side of the mirror. The reference to Velazquez is omnipresent in his work-- in Aguayo's sense of space, in the refinements and enchantments of the colorist, in the energy with which he endows space with a radiant presence. Among his works are a few rare self-portraits **shrouded in a shadowy light** and not lacking in dignity, as if the artist, after delving into his inner depths, were able to project himself outward and give himself an authentic, timeless presence in the space of a self-portrait.

**For these paintings do not recount anything; they expose and reveal pictorial states of consciousness, they are the truths of an instant:** their art is in the service of a deeper, and a deeply felt, knowledge of life and of reality.

**To become one with his subject, to transfigure the animate nature of beings and delve into human nature in order to extract knowledge from it,** Aguayo sometimes makes use of a mirror, not to reflect his own image but as a tool that enables him to reveal the mind and consciousness in all their density and energy. A man among men, a man standing in the midst of the crowd in search of himself and in full consciousness of his humanity, Aguayo is the exact opposite of a sickly narcissist gazing at his self-image.



*Infante Margarita en rose*, 1960-61. Oil on canvas. 76,77 x 51,18 inches. 195 x 130 cm.

A painter to the depths of his being Aguayo prefers the livelier medium of oil to acrylic because it dries slowly and can be redone. Oil demands a total commitment on the part of the artist who can wipe away his composition and start anew, redoing it from memory. In the words of Aguayo: *"By dint of making, unmaking and starting all over again, there comes a moment when the painting makes itself as it were. There is a kind of progression that just happens. Then one works very fast and one knows, one feels, that the picture is there"*.

There are no sharply contrasting colors in Aguayo as there are in the paintings of Nicolas

de Staël, but rather grey, blue and brown shades as deep as the resonances of bright red and yellow and combined in a most subtle and refined manner.

**Charles Estienne**, the great critic and defender of abstract art, has this to say about



the artist: **"Aguayo is the height of abstraction, yet he is also the champion of figuration in the noble sense of the word (the kind of figuration that would never copy or caricature reality)."**

*Atelier aux baigneuses*, 1967-69. Oil on canvas.  
44,88 x 57,87 inches. 114 x 147 cm

This exhibition proposes, through a selection of Aguayo's major works along with a few never before seen works on paper, to make known to a wider public an artist who assumed his destiny as a painter and who sought-- with nobility and self-restraint-- neither to please nor to convince but to explore the constants of the human condition.

In the judgment of Dora Vallier, formed in her approach to painting by Christian Zervos, *"Aguayo is to painting what Giacometti succeeded in doing in sculpture."*

More than thirty years after his death in 1977 at the age of 51, this exhibition is intended as a rehabilitation of a great painter who proves that painting is fundamentally alive.

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*Molinos*, 1950.  
Oil on canvas  
33,27 x 20,87 inches.  
84,50 x 53 cm.



*Eté castillan*, 1955. Oil on hardboard.  
35,83 x 47,24 inches. 91 x 120 cm.



*Grande boucherie*, 1960-61. Oil on canvas.  
63,78 x 51,18 inches. 162 x 130 cm



*Infante Margarita en rose*, 1960-61.  
Oil on canvas.  
76,77 x 51,18 inches. 195 x 130 cm.



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*Atelier aux oranges*, 1967-68. Oil on canvas. 74,80 x 114,17 inches. 190 x 290 cm



*Trois nus pour un espace*, 1968. Oil on canvas. 74,80 x 114,17 inches. 190 x 290 cm