



JEAN FAUTRIER

(Paris 1898–1964 Châtenay-Malabry)

La passoire. 1947.

Oil on wove paper on canvas.

Signed lower right: fautrier. Titled on the stretcher: La passoire.

46 x 55 cm.

The authenticity of the work has been confirmed by Castor Seibel, Comité Fautier, Paris, 24 April 2018 (there dated 1947). Provenance: - Alexander Iolas Gallery, New York (verso with the label). - Auction Sotheby's London, 25 March 1999, Lot 52. - Private collection Germany. - Purchased from the above by the present owner, since then private collection Switzerland. Exhibitions: - Jerusalem, The Israel Museum (verso with the label). - Winterthur 2017, Jean Fautrier.

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Kunstmuseum Winterthur, 26 August - 12 November 2017, p. 137 (verso with the label, with colour ill.)(deviant dating). - Paris 2018, Jean Fautrier, matière et lumière. Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 26 Januar - 20 Mai 2018, p. 157 (with colour ill) (deviant dating). "I was born on 16 May 1898 in Paris, my parents both came from Béarn – my maternal grandmother was Irin, she idolised me despite my totally impossible character. It was she who looked after me, until the day, without understanding why, I saw her lying in bed. A few days later she died, although day after day I waited to resume our trips together (...). From that day on I was entrusted to the care of nannies from various countries – I barely saw my mother, she led a very glamorous life, and my father was too taken up with his businesses. Every now and again I got to see them briefly – my character had hardly changed. (...) A little later my father died suddenly of a heart attack and once again my life was to change radically. My desperate mother wanted a change of scene and travelled to London in order to settle there: she only arranged for me to join her three months later – I was eleven. Until my father's death, no one had ever considered anything but a future in commerce for me. Even then I liked to draw (...) and finally understood that I would like to paint: art had an irresistible attraction for me. My mother did not resist these early signs, and so I attended a drawing and painting school. After a year I was considered a kind of prodigy and was admitted to the Royal Academy in London, a rarity at the time, since there were only around twenty pupils. I was fourteen. Everyone was thrilled." (From: extracts from a letter from 1944 from Jean Fautrier to Jean Paulhan). On these early foundations, Jean Fautrier built his career as an artist. He is now considered one of the most important Post-War artists and he played an extraordinary role in French painting. After attending the Royal Academy of Arts and then the Slade School of Arts, he was to follow his own path consistently throughout his life. "I refuse to join any school, Cubist or otherwise. I appreciate that Cubism is a done deal, and that Surrealism, which was then in fashion, is equally so: I would even say it was a done deal from the outset." (Lescure, Jean. *En écoutant Fautrier*, 1999, p.15) In his lifetime, the leading intellectuals of his era referred to him as

the epitome of French art in the first half of the 20th century. Today he is identified as the most important founder of Informel art. His first commercial successes came in 1927 with his series of "black pictures" characterised by an almost monochrome palette. On an anthracite and black background barely recognisable hunting still lifes, figures or plants emerge. The transitions to the dark background are unclear and the objects seem to manifest themselves only briefly. After the economic crisis and a break for health reasons he began to paint again at the end of the 1930s. His objects take on an increasingly subtle form, since they can only be recognised through their outlines. From then onwards his works are characterised by an increasingly gestural style, and he sought in his works the maximum reduction, concentrating on the essence of the object. In the final years of the war, he developed the style which would prevail from that point onwards: as pictorial support he used sheets of wove paper laid on canvas. The canvas was laid horizontally on a table and he applied a warmed fine white paste with a spatula. He worked the product until an outline and a sculpture of his object came to light. He then sprinkled colour pigment over this and mixed it into the product, partly with a brush. His works were henceforth characterised by a white background, on which he applied intensely coloured pigments such as blue, green, yellow or orange. The forms of his objects, landscapes, still lifes (flowers or everyday objects) appear to dissolve in the mass, but the essential quality of the subject remains. The work presented here from 1947, "La Passoire", is a wonderful example of the painting technique and style which he developed, and which was first referred to in 1951 by the art critic Michel Tapié as 'Art Informel'. The painting "La Passoire" also illustrates precisely the definition of Informel given by Hans-Jürgen Schwalm: "By freeing colour from the shackles of predetermined form and by opening up the picture to spontaneous, gestural, eruptive action, the traditional concept of the image is overcome. The artist no longer composes according to a previously planned outcome. Instead he allows the dynamic processes to become visible: he captures the act of painting itself in the moment of highest concentration as a trace of movement in the picture, or makes colour the central theme as material,

Koller Auktionen - Lot 3406

A189 PostWar & Contemporary - Saturday 29 June 2019, 02.00 PM

in order to set it free from all associations of form or connection to an object." (quote:
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