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Marguerite Louppe: *Diagramming Space*

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By Jonathan Goodman



Marguerite Louppe, *Vue des buis à Truffières*, n.d. Oil on canvas, 32.3 x 39.6 inches. Courtesy Rosenberg & Co.

Rosenberg & Co.

Marguerite Louppe: Diagramming Space

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It is a mystery how the twentieth-century French painter Marguerite Louppe has escaped the recognition she has deserved for so long. Born in 1902 in eastern France, Louppe and her family moved to Paris shortly after her birth. Louppe studied at several academies there, including the Académie Julian, where her fellow students included Dubuffet, Duchamp, Bourgeois, and Maurice Brianchon, whom she married in 1934. She enjoyed success early in her career, showing at the Galerie Charpentier, a leading space for new artists, in 1936. Her style, a wonderful mixture of radiant realism and structural clarity, found expression in studies of buildings, interiors, and still lifes, all of them characterized by visionary precision and a sense of muted, enjoined color. We are so distant from this sort of art now that it might be hard for some to appreciate Louppe's extraordinary skill, which should not be characterized as major or minor, but rather as tellingly exact. Every once in a while, an artist comes along whose command of her medium evades traditional description, and while it is easy to note the influence of Cubist abstraction in Louppe's body of work, her paintings stand as independent statements given to a deliberate beauty outside of any general contextualization.

Vue des buis a Truffieres (no date) consists of an exterior view of a building, made of gray stone. It has a red sloping roof and two chimneys. Just in front of the building is a pile of wood, stacked in regular fashion between two verticals. The rest of the painting is dominated by a yellow-brown yard, with white poles rising to the top of the composition. On the right is another large, contained bundle, with angled lines cutting across the upper third of the painting. These lines schematically divide the higher space, giving even the open air a structure. They also direct our gaze so that it crisscrosses the painting, establishing patterns of focus we can grasp and study. It is a beautiful painting making use of a conventional theme. *Nestor au salon* (no date) shifts to an interior, dominated by a warm brown cupboard, filled with white crockery; a table of brown wood; and a charming portrait of a dachshund, presumably a family pet, who sits on a chair with a high back next to the table. To the left of the painting, we see a good-sized clay pot holding a large plant with green and yellow leaves; on top of the table there is a patterned rug, mostly in red; and in the back, against the wall, two chairs with open backs. As a testament to a calm and beatific life, the painting communicates a genuine warmth—an atmosphere not found often today.



Marguerite Louppe, *Nature morte à la théière*, n.d. Oil on canvas, 25.6. x 31.7 inches. Courtesy Rosenberg & Co.

Louppe was marvelously gifted at painting still lifes. *Nature morte a la theiere* (no date) consists of a table, made up of various wooden pieces of several colors (brown, light brown, tan, even a thin panel of white), with a dark wine bottle, accompanied by two thin glasses with ribbed sides, standing on the left. In the center, next to the bottle, is an open box whose visible exterior side has an organic abstract design. To its right is a gray teapot. The wall behind the table, forming the background, is mostly nondescript: in the left a panel of yellow and red; in the center a gray plane mottled with individual marks; and on the right, a column defined by lines, clearly a part of the house. This description of the work, and also the others, may seem constrained, too conventional to be considered major art. But this is hardly the case; Louppe makes visionary statements of subject matter both traditional as a theme in twentieth-century French painting and as a statement of a fulfilled life. The tacit beauty in her work, both structural and quietly colorful, deserves more than considerable praise. Painting during Louppe's life was a matter of subtlety and craft, two attributes the artist possessed in abundance.

Contributor

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