

# Les Lalanne

SELECTED PRESS

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

## Atelier Lalanne

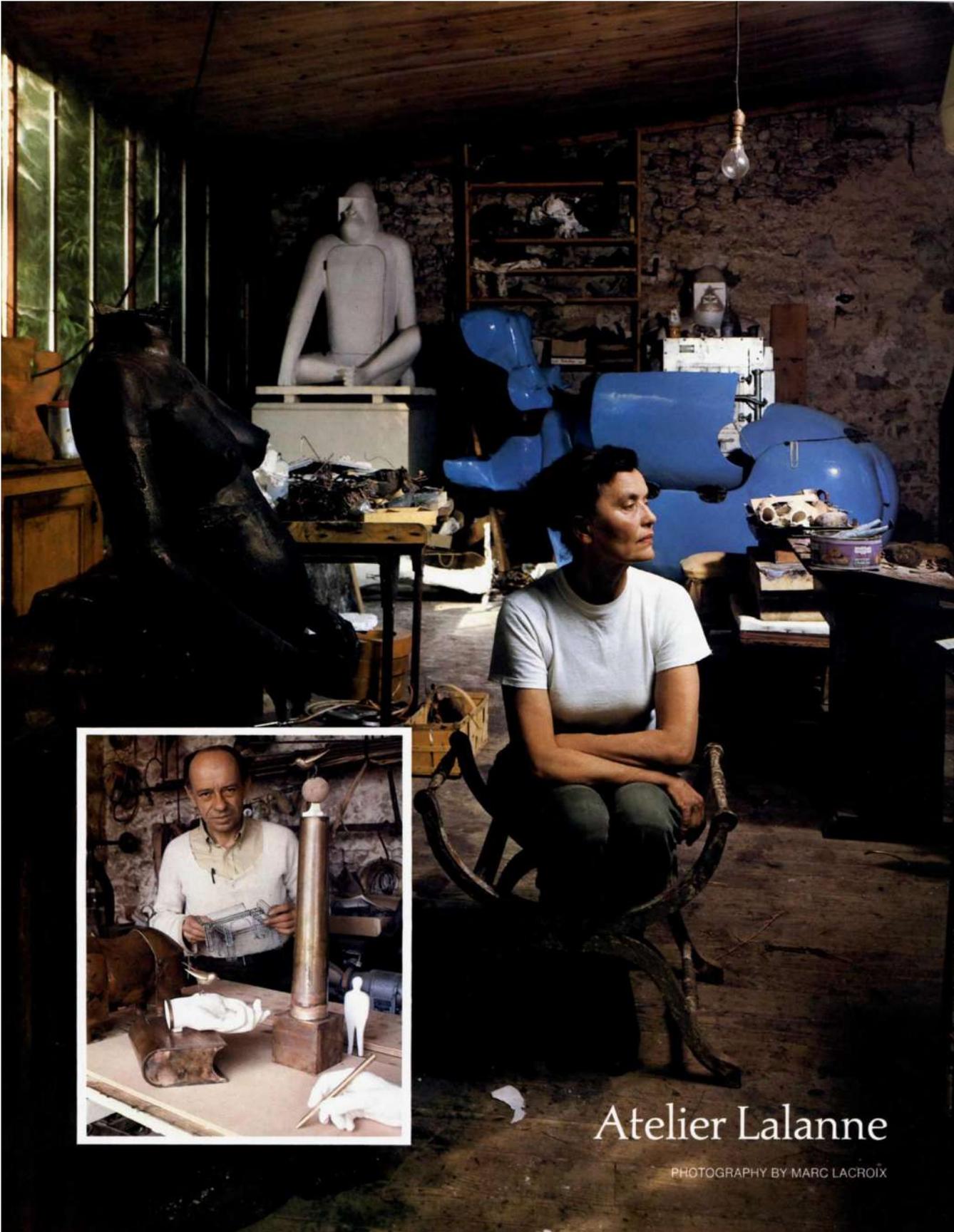
JEAN-LOUIS GAILLEMIN  
FEBRUARY 1981

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF FINE INTERIOR DESIGN

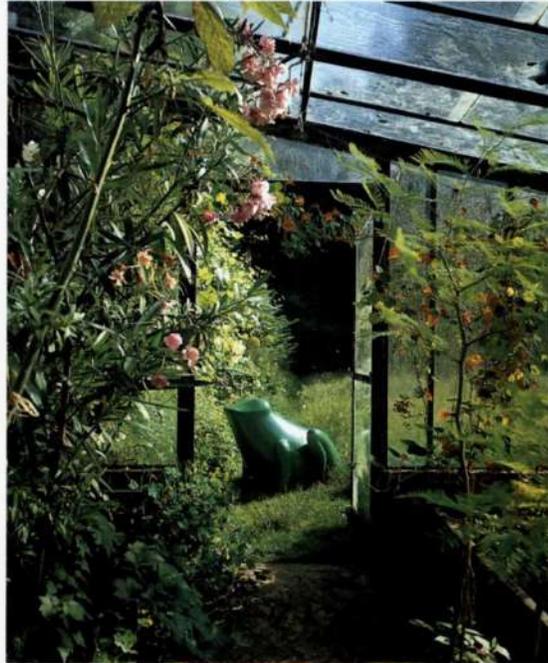
FEBRUARY 1981 \$3.50





# Atelier Lalanne

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARC LACROIX



FOR A LONG TIME NOW, the fascinating creations of Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne have graced private collections all over the world. The imaginative work in wood and metal by François-Xavier is at first a bit startling: hippopotamuses splashing around in bathrooms; frogs croaking at the edge of swimming pools; sheep grazing on floors and carpets of the most respectable drawing rooms. Recently, as a matter of fact, a flock of his sheep clambered up the escalator of the Centre Georges Pompidou, in Paris, to the alpine heights of the Musée d'Art Moderne.

However, critics have often been reluctant to take the droll Lalanne bestiary with any seriousness. The problem is obvious. In what category do these fabricated animals, disguised as chairs and writing tables and bathtubs, belong? Are they furniture, or are they sculpture? "Simply think of them as Lalannes," say the two creators, with calm reasonableness, for they have never exactly considered themselves either artists or craftsmen. The precise definition



of their work is difficult to reach. In the past, for example, their studio in Montparnasse had all the cluttered appearance of a mechanic's workshop. There were soldering irons, bits and drills everywhere, electroplating baths—as well as an enormous and haphazard collection of objets trouvés used in their work.

Even today, their house in the country, in a village on the edge of the forest of Fontainebleau, has much the same atmosphere. It is difficult to realize that this used to be a farm supplying the nearby city of Paris with fruits and vegetables and the famous cream cheese of Fontainebleau. The Lalannes have become country people, and very honestly they have installed themselves in the manner of village blacksmiths.

There is little doubt that they acquired the village house in order to give their lives an orientation that is at once creative and practical. During the years they lived in Paris they did a variety of work for others, such as the décor they created for the Christian Dior boutique. At the same time,

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however, François-Xavier was beginning to learn the techniques of working with copper and brass—the metal horses he created for the ballet choreographer Maurice Béjart for the Paris Opera are an example—while Claude, in work she was doing for the house of Lanvin, was making herself a master of electroplating. Instinctively, they were becoming restless with such ephemeral work as window decoration, boutique décor and stage sets. This dissatisfaction surely led them to begin a reevaluation of the traditional rules of furniture design, and they decided to work entirely for themselves.

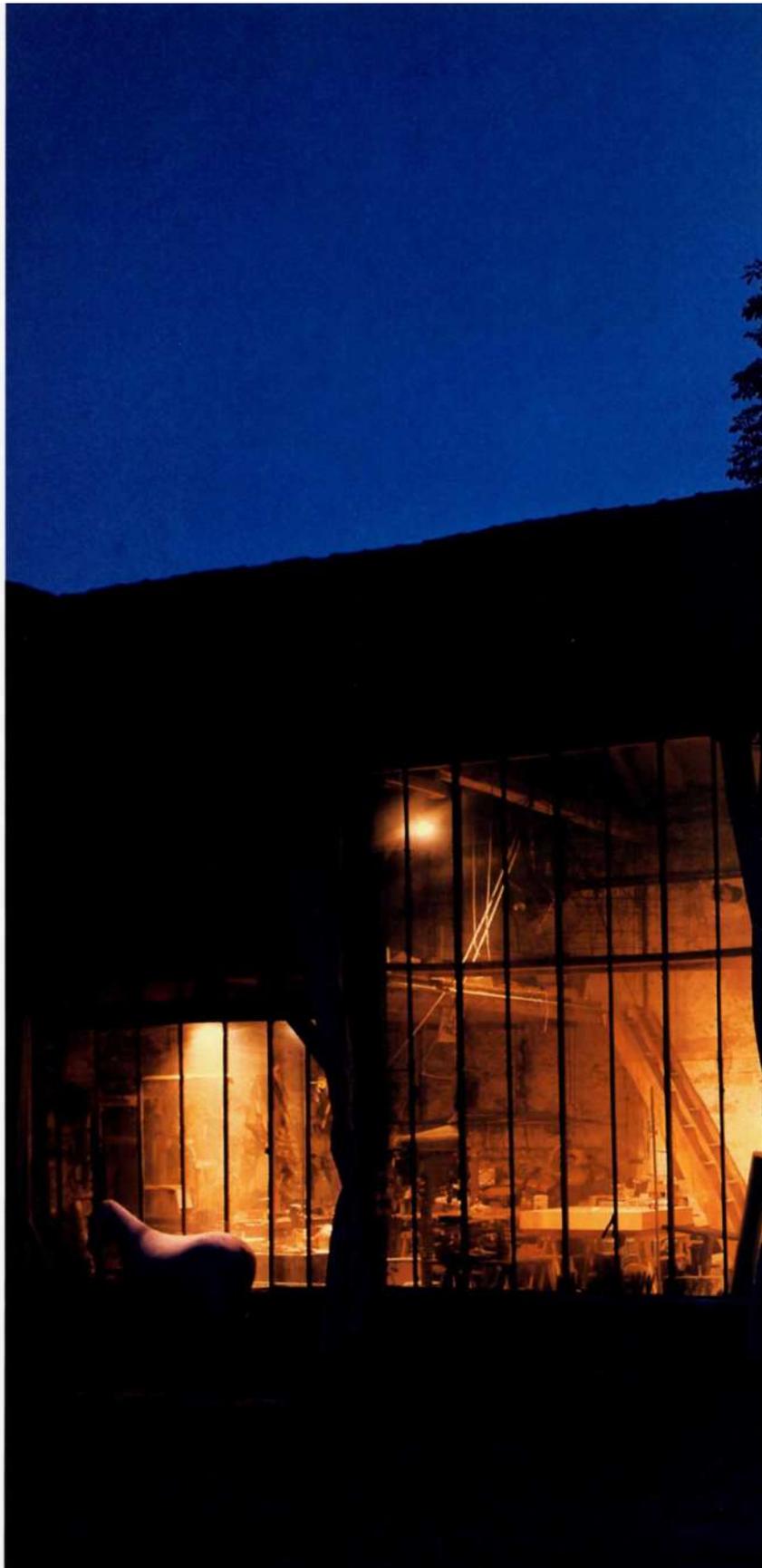
Soon people of imagination became enchanted with the unique vision of the Lalannes, with the monumental insolence of such works as their *rhinocrétaire*, a desk in the form of a rhinoceros, used by the architect Emile Aillaud. Other commissions followed: Yves Saint-Laurent ordered a bar, for example, and designer Karl Lagerfeld a drawing table. Eventually, gallery owner Alexander Iolas began to promote their work.

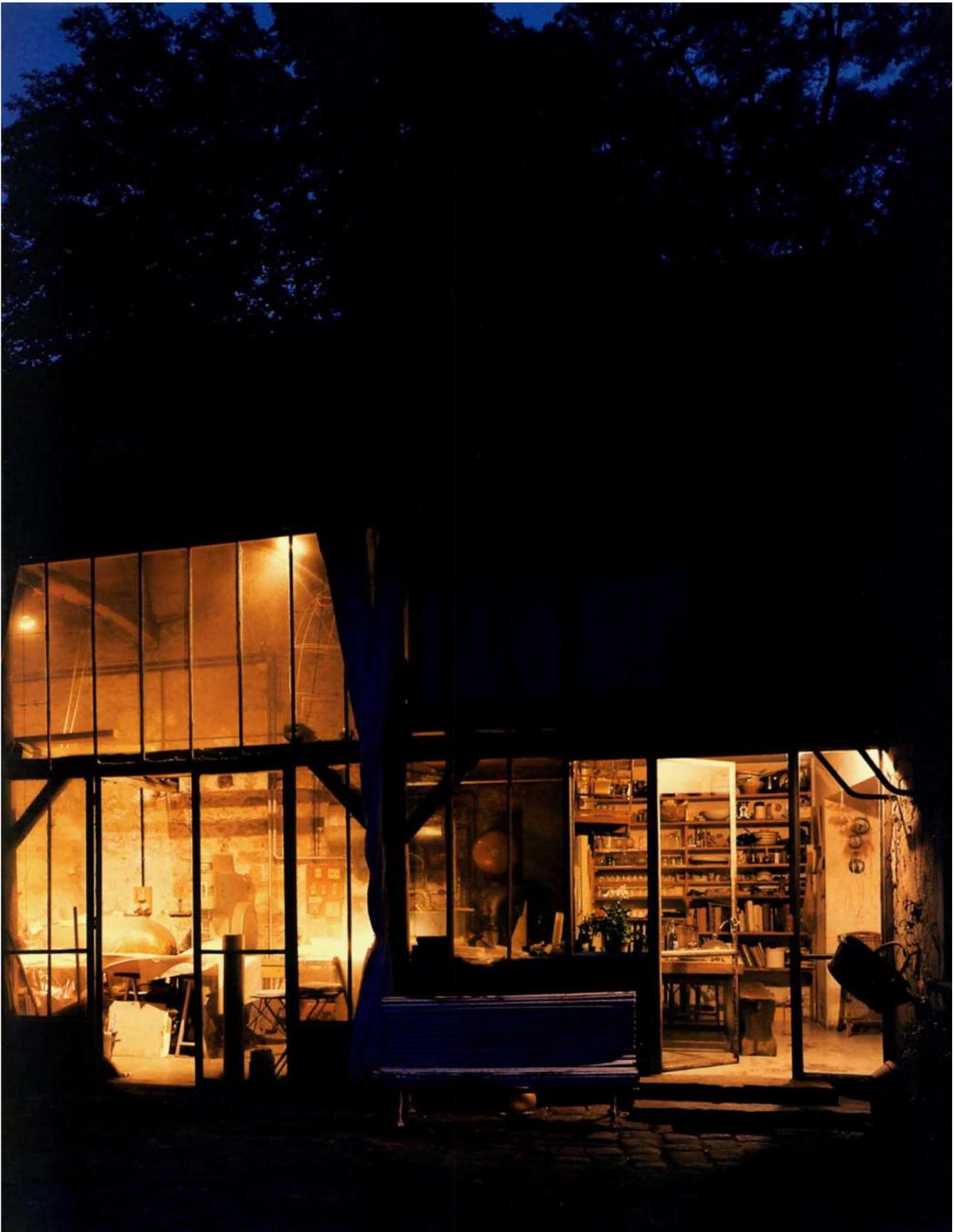
“Why is a raven like a writing desk?” the Mad Hatter asked Alice. And, in the same vein of reasonable insanity, the Lalannes see no reason why a rabbit with floppy ears should not serve as a weathervane. Basically, what they are doing is giving reality to the dreams of poets—and of children. Did you never dream of a hippopotamus splashing in a stream? With unimpeachable, if slightly mad, logic, the Lalannes produced their bathtub design in the form of that frolicking animal. And what child has not pretended to smoke a banana as if it were a cigar? Naturally the Lalannes have obliged with a cigar box in the form of a banana.

Their heads filled with such

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From the courtyard, lofty windows reveal the constructive clutter of François-Xavier's atelier, filled with tools, models and works in various stages of completion. Linen curtains are hung outside the studio, protected from the fallout of artistic fervor. Appearing to gaze into the studio, a plaster model of a donkey that opens into a desk is M. Lalanne's pun on the expression *bureau en dos d'âne*—a term for a drop-front desk.





“Why is a raven like a writing desk?” the Mad Hatter asked.



TOP LEFT: M. Lalanne's massive hippopotamus of molded polyester conceals a basin in its mouth and a bathtub in its back. TOP RIGHT: Claude Lalanne applied galvanized copper to such natural objects as seedpods and crab claws to create provocative candleholders and tablesettings. ABOVE LEFT: An antique kiosk ornament and a crumple of paper were transformed by Mme Lalanne into a lamp. At left, a bronze sculpture, *La Petite Fille à la poule*, expresses another facet of her oeuvre. ABOVE RIGHT: By cutting a ladder in half, M. Lalanne constructed a staircase; a Max Ernst engraving adorns the first landing. Nearby perches an open Rhinoceros Box. OPPOSITE: The round, hinged sections of a leather, steel and brass table by M. Lalanne allow it to be rearranged into other configurations.





dreamlike furniture, the Lalannes pay little attention to filling their own house with consciously decorative objects. The furniture they have was acquired at local auctions or gathered from family attics. The result is a somewhat haphazard collection of rustic pieces from the period of Louis XVI through the early 1900s, along with some venerable upholstered pieces from the Second Empire. Everywhere their approach is casual and imaginative. A sheepskin—clearly there are many on hand—is thrown carelessly over a steel armchair, for example, and a crumpled

piece of paper is the shade for a kiosk ornament serving as a lamp. Everything, transformed by the infectious humor of the artists, undergoes a sea change of startling dimension.

Far from being egotistical, the two artists refuse to have their work mass-produced, but their output is generous and brings pleasure to many. The work of the two Lalannes does bring joy, and this fact has recently been recognized by the city of Paris. François-Xavier has been asked to design a garden to occupy what used to be the great markets of *Les Halles*. One part of it, set aside for

ABOVE: In the Master Bedroom, François-Xavier's woolen rug offers a unique perspective on sheep. What appears to be a pair of ostriches balancing an egg is actually his version of a bar. The wings open to reveal containers for wine; the egg contains an ice bucket. OPPOSITE: Claude molded galvanized copper over natural elements to create a sinuous love seat and mirror for Yves Saint-Laurent's Paris apartment.

children, will be designed by Claude herself. The results can only be charming and unique, surely providing yet another example of the couple's rare imagination and the appeal of their compelling creations. □

—Jean-Louis Gaillemain



# Galerie

## The Artful Life: 6 Things Galerie Editors Love This Week

From a blockbuster Andy Warhol sale to monumental Les Lalanne sculptures on view at Kasmin in New York

LUCY REES  
MAY 10, 2022



Installation view of “Les Lalanne: Au Grand Air” in the Kasmin Sculpture Garden. PHOTO: PHOTOGRAPHY BY DIEGO FLORES. © 2022 LES LALANNE / ARTIST RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK / ADAGP, PARIS

[EXCERPT]

### Monumental Les Lalanne Sculptures Go on View in New York

Spring has finally sprung in New York. To celebrate the longstanding connection between art and nature, three large-scale bronze sculptures by the late French artist duo François-Xavier and Claude Lalanne have been installed in the Kasmin Sculpture Garden on the roof of the gallery in the city’s Chelsea neighborhood. Titled “Les Lalanne: Au Grand Air,” the presentation comprises two large-scale bronze sculptures by François-Xavier Lalanne, *Sanglier de Villepinte* (2006) and *Lapin à Vent de Tourtour* (2007), and one major piece by Claude Lalanne, *Pomme d’Hiver* (2008). A public opening will be held on Thursday, May 12 from 6 to 8pm at 514 West 28th Street, where additional works by the pair are displayed in the gallery.

## At Versailles, Marie Antoinette's private retreat plays host to a madcap menagerie

CHLOË ASHBY  
JULY 2, 2021



*Lapin à Vent de Tourtour* (1968–94), François-Xavier Lalanne Photo: Capucine de Chabaneix; courtesy Galerie Mitterrand; © François-Xavier Lalanne

‘The interesting thing,’ says Jean-Gabriel Mitterrand, ‘is that when you use a Lalanne desk, bar or chair, you have to change the way you use a desk, bar or chair.’ To demonstrate his point, the Parisian art dealer shifts left and right on the seat of Claude Lalanne’s *Banquette Crocodile* (2006). ‘I can’t sit on this banquette as I normally would. I have to search for a comfortable position, and one that shows the crocodile.’ He gestures to one of two gilt-bronze reptiles, snouts almost touching, their tails wrapped around the edge of the banquette and their scaly bodies forming its back. Sitting opposite in a matching armchair, I too begin to fidget, conscious all of a sudden of a claw close by my elbow.

We’re in the French Pavilion, a rococo structure in the Estate of Trianon at Versailles, west of Paris. Large windows overlook the neatly manicured French gardens and the neoclassical Petit Trianon palace beyond; nearby are the less formal English gardens and the rustic Queen’s Hamlet. Construction on the estate primarily took place during the reigns of Louis XV and Louis XVI, whose wife, Marie Antoinette, sought refuge from the stuffy confines of court life in the bucolic surroundings and quickly made them her own. Snaking through the grounds this summer is a sculpture trail of more than 50 works by François-Xavier and Claude Lalanne, known together as *Les Lalanne*. Claude, who died in 2019 at the age of 93, and her husband, who died 11 years earlier, have been represented by Mitterrand’s gallery since the early 1990s.

This open-air show is free from signage, so visitors are left to chance upon the fantastical creations on tree-lined avenues and in grassy meadows and lakes. One of the first I encounter is François-Xavier's *L'Âne Attelé* (1984), an astonishingly lifelike donkey and cart parked in the courtyard of the Petit Trianon. Claude's *Pomme de New York* (2006), a freshly buffed golden apple, sits on a tidy lawn as if it's fallen from the branch of a golden tree. On the way to the *Belvédère*, an octagonal folly completed in 1781, is her *Choupatte* (2016), a bronze cabbage standing on chicken legs, and inside is François-Xavier's *Lit Cocodoll* (1964), a dreamy bed shaped like a seagull.



*Choupatte* (2016), Claude Lalanne. Photo: Capucine de Chabaneix; courtesy Galerie Mitterrand; © Claude Lalanne

From the beginning of their partnership Les Lalanne, who met in 1952 and married fifteen years later, bridged the gap between sculpture and decorative art. Though they built their brand as a couple, for the most part they stuck to separate studios. They shared a fondness for nature – François-Xavier focused mostly on animals, Claude on botanical forms – but each had a distinctive style. Following in the classical tradition of Poussin, Ingres and Matisse, François-Xavier favoured pure lines, keen to capture an animal's expression and movement with minimum detail. Claude's work is more ornamental and baroque. 'She was in a way the contrary of François-Xavier,' says Mitterrand. 'While he began with drawing, she began with all the materials she had in the studio.' Through a 19th-century process called galvanoplastie, or electroplating, she transformed nature into art – immersing flora and fauna in a bath of copper sulphate to create metal casts of the organic matter.

Together with Laurent Salomé, director of the National Museum of the Palace of Versailles and Trianon, Mitterrand carefully considered where to position each work. Both familiar and lesser-known sculptures dot the grounds, which are intimate and varied and a better fit for Les Lalanne than the stately surrounds of the main Château de Versailles. In the French gardens, formerly home to exotic plants and animals beloved by the kings, can be found a seated gorilla and a steel arch supported by two elephants. In the English gardens, wild boar stalk a deer, and a bear rises up on its hind legs. The Queen's Hamlet, a fairy-tale-like model village built at the request of Marie Antoinette in the 1780s, is populated by a bronze rabbit with a staff and a pair of oversized turtle doves. 'The sculptures suit the landscape, of course, but also the ideas and tastes of the 18th century,' says Catherine Pégard, president of Versailles. 'The spirit and sense of humour at the court, too.'



In the foreground, François-Xavier Lalanne's *Les nouveaux moutons*, Bélier, Brebis et Agneau (1994–96); in the background, his *Ane Bâté* (1985)  
Photo: Capucine de Chabaneix; courtesy Galerie Mitterrand; © François-Xavier Lalanne

That sense of humour comes across in François-Xavier's functional sculptures. Back in the French Pavilion is the *Bar Atruches* (1970), commissioned by Georges Pompidou for the Élysée Palace and made with the help of the Manufacture de Sèvres. One of only a handful of editions, and exceptionally fragile, it's rarely been seen. Still, in theory drinks can be stored within the porcelain ostriches' bodies, while the egg balancing on the counter extending between their beaks is meant for ice cubes. It's both practical and playful. 'Les Lalanne have a kind of surrealist humour,' says Mitterrand. 'They change the way we use art and how we live with it.' They might also be said to change how we see the world around them: elsewhere, a bull with a large rectangular cut-out reframes a view.

The dialogue between the creations of Les Lalanne and the surrounding landscape is a delight. François-Xavier's *Carpe d'Or* (1996) floats on the surface of the lake pooling out in front of the *Belvédère*, its golden glow reflected in the water and illuminating actual fish below. During my visit, a herd of his trademark stone-and-bronze sheep – which double as seats – are accompanied by a real-life flock of geese. While the geese are dozing, beaks tucked beneath wings, *Les Nouveaux Moutons* (1994) are alert, keeping watch as I approach.

A collaboration between Galerie Mitterrand and the Château de Versailles, the exhibition was planned in just three months. The palace usually hosts an exhibition by a living artist every year, but the current circumstances meant it was too expensive and difficult to realise. Mitterrand met with Pégard in March and floated the idea of showing Les Lalanne instead. Pégard asked if the show could be ready for the reopening of Versailles in June. Thanks to the co-operation of the four daughters of François-Xavier and Claude, who have lent roughly 70 per cent of the artworks on show, and a handful of other devoted collectors, it could. 'This exhibition is quite different from those we've had in previous years,' says Pégard. 'It's poetic and it takes on the spirit of Marie Antoinette and of the Trianon.'

That spirit shines through particularly in Les Lalanne's more fanciful designs. Before I leave, I decide to take another turn around the French gardens. Linger on the Petit Trianon's western terrace is François-Xavier's *Lapin à Vent de Tourtour* (1994), a beast with the body of a bird, hooved feet and a softly forked fishtail. It has a rabbit's head that moves like a weathervane in the breeze, and as I pass by I'm sure I see it turn to follow me. The Estate of Trianon provided Marie Antoinette with an escape, and more than two centuries later the wonderful, whimsical sculptures of Les Lalanne offer us the same: they set the imagination free.

# Versailles transformed into Lalanne land

The palace grounds are populated by creatures in an exhibition of sculptures by French artists Les Lalanne

LAURA CAPPELLE  
JUNE 28, 2021



When visitors wander into the Queen's Hamlet, a picturesque corner of the Versailles Palace dreamt up by Marie-Antoinette, it may take them a while to notice what's different this summer. The small village has gained new inhabitants — including two ducks looking at each other by the lake, a bronze donkey and two oversized doves.

They fit so seamlessly into their bucolic surroundings, designed in the 1780s by Richard Mique, that it's easy to forget they are the work of two whimsical 20th-century artists: Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne, better known as "Les Lalanne".

For half a century, the husband-and-wife team carved a niche at the crossroads of sculpture and decorative arts. Both drew from nature for their animal- and plant-inspired works, and many are cheekily designed to be used. The donkey grazing in Versailles isn't just a statue, but opens to become a desk; the doves' backs are carved into a chair.

Although François-Xavier died in 2008, followed by Claude in 2019, their large output has arguably never been more popular. A large sale at Sotheby's in Paris, shortly after Claude's death, drew more than 4,000 bidders from 43 countries, and exceeded all expectations to raise €91.3m (more than four times the estimate).



François-Xavier Lalanne's 'Singe avisé' and 'Lapin à vent de Tourtour' © Capucine de Chabaneix.

The exhibition at the Versailles Palace, west of Paris, is set to cement their place in the pantheon of French sculptors — and inject a little playfulness into visits to the venerable palace. Rather than being grouped in a single space, the Lalannes' works are deliberately scattered around the Queen's Hamlet, the Petit Trianon — the smaller residence gifted by Louis XVI to Marie-Antoinette — and its English gardens.

Turn a corner near the Love Monument, and you may spot a large wapiti, designed by François-Xavier, near a clearing; elsewhere, boars stalk a deer from across a small river, and sheep keep their distance from a bear. "After an hour, you feel like the works have always been there," says Catherine Pégard, the director of the Versailles Palace.

Yet there were no plans to bring them to Versailles until March of this year. The palace usually puts on a contemporary art exhibition by a living artist each year, but after a cancelled season last year due to the pandemic, Pégard opted for caution. "We hadn't planned anything for 2021, first due to the uncertainty, and also because our financial situation is far from easy," she says.

Jean-Gabriel Mitterrand, a veteran art dealer and nephew of former French president François Mitterrand, saw an opportunity. A Lalanne exhibition at Versailles had been on his mind for a long time: "I had mentioned it to Claude before she died, but she was too tired," he says. Pégard said yes — but with only three months to plan it, and find sponsors.



Claude Lalanne, 'Lapin de Victoire' and François-Xavier Lalanne, 'Moutons' © Didier Saulnier.

Dior provided financial backing: Claude designed jewellery for designer Maria Grazia Chiuri's first collection there in 2017, one of the Lalannes' many brushes with fashion. (Yves Saint Laurent was a major early supporter of the pair.) And Mitterrand, who started working with Claude and François-Xavier in 1975 and went on to represent them via his own Galerie Mitterrand, persuaded their four daughters to lend 70 per cent of the roughly 50 artworks on display.

While the Lalannes often made copies of their designs, some of the sculptures at Versailles have rarely been seen. François-Xavier's "Bar Autruches", with its two porcelain ostriches holding a bar counter in their beaks, was commissioned in the 1970s by president Georges Pompidou for the Elysée Palace, where it still stands today. Only a handful are in circulation, and the Sèvres porcelain is too fragile to open the ostriches' wings or to pour ice into the egg that stands between them. Regardless, in Versailles' French Pavilion, where it echoes a golden frieze dotted with birds, it looks spectacular.



François-Xavier Lalanne, 'Wapiti' and Claude Lalanne, 'Pomme de New York' © Didier Saulnier.

"A fundamental principle of the Lalannes' work is to make sculpture useful," Mitterrand says. In the recently restored Cool Pavilion stands a lush piece by Claude, the "Lit Singerie", whose monkeys swinging from branches overlook the bed; inside the neoclassical Belvédère, another bed — François-Xavier's "Cocodoll", which is shaped like a seagull — seems as if it's waiting for Marie-Antoinette to lounge on it.

Even though they rose to fame as a duo, the Lalannes actually worked separately. According to Mitterrand, they only co-created “three or four” pieces over the course of their lives. At home, their studios were separate. “They always said: we share a bedroom, but not a studio,” Mitterrand says. “At the end of their work days, they had a little reunion. They would talk about their work, and usually they were in agreement.”

The Lalannes shared Surrealist influences and a love of nature, but each had a distinctive style, too. “François-Xavier had a love of classical French paintings and worked with very strict, pure lines, while Claude was more baroque,” Mitterrand says. While her husband worked from drawings, Claude revived a 19th-century process known as electrotyping, or galvanoplasty, to reproduce her models.



François-Xavier Lalanne, ‘Oies’ © Capucine de Chabaneix; and ‘Ours et moutons’ © Didier Saulnier

“She would dip flowers and plants into a moulding material, and then use the mould to craft bronzes. It allowed her to work as close to nature as possible,” Mitterrand says. The only human figure in the exhibition is also by Claude: “Olympe”, a fountain installed near the Belvédère, is based on a moulding of one of her granddaughters.

At home, where the pair often entertained, their sculptures weren’t merely for show. Guests were occasionally invited to use Claude’s leaf-inspired cutlery or François-Xavier’s duck-shaped salt shaker. Yet Mitterrand insists their creations weren’t “functional” per se. “When you use a Lalanne piece, it doesn’t serve you: you serve the work. Claude’s cutlery, for instance, had to be handled elegantly. It requires you to invent a relationship with each piece.”

Art collectors are now queueing up to buy works by the Lalannes in the wake of a series of major exhibitions and sales, starting with the auction of Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé’s collection in 2009. The 2019 Sotheby’s sale, which served to pay for inheritance taxes on the Lalannes’ family collection, helped to spread pieces around the world, Mitterrand says. This spring and summer the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts, is also hosting the first museum exhibition devoted to the Lalannes in the US in over 40 years.

The next step might be a permanent exhibition space to host the Lalannes’ quirky menagerie — perhaps at the pair’s former home near Paris, which now belongs to one of their daughters. “Perhaps it could remain an artists’ house, open to visitors,” Mitterrand says. “We may yet be able to do it.”

# AD

## Move Over, Marie Antoinette—These Giant Animal Sculptures Are Taking Over Versailles

Of course, they are the work of Les Lalanne

GAY GASSMANN  
JUNE 16, 2021



A Lalanne gorilla sculpture surveys the Trianon area of Versailles. All photos: Capucine de Chabaneix

While Paris is bustling with renewed energy and life, its nearby neighbors refuse to be outdone by the City of Light. Case in point? None other than Versailles. In addition to opening a gorgeous hotel (the Airelles Château de Versailles) this summer, the palatial property is poised to unveil a head-turning new installation. The effort, which is set to be unveiled later this week, will be the largest outdoor exhibition to date of the late French artists Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne. Located on the grounds of the Trianon, it covers 50 years of creative production and is set to remain on view through October 10.

“After the Lalannes’ exhibition in Bagatelle in 1998, I have always been thinking about another major exhibition for them and of course, always thought about Versailles,” Jean-Gabriel Mitterrand, the longtime dealer of Les Lalanne and a chief organizer of the show, says to AD PRO. “I had spoken to Claude Lalanne about this, but it was toward the end and she was just too tired and didn’t want to embark on a major project like this. About three months ago I was having lunch with Catherine Pégard, a great friend and president of Versailles, and I asked what she thought about doing an exhibition. She said yes immediately, and at the same time told me it had to happen now for the summer and for the reopening of Versailles after lockdown.”

Soon, Mitterrand sprung into action. And now, "[Les Lalannes at Trianon](#)" is set to be unveiled on June 19. Approximately 60 works of art will be scattered throughout the grounds of the garden area, which encompasses the Grand Trianon, Petit Trianon, Queen's Hamlet, and English and French gardens. "The results are ravishing," Mitterrand adds. "The proportions are perfect for their work. I always wanted to associate their [oeuvre] with the grand history of France and great French taste."

Present are the iconic sheep grazing on a hill, ducks in a pond, and standing bunny, with additional works sprinkled throughout. "[It] is all in large part thanks to the artist's four daughters that this exhibition is possible," Mitterrand explains. "Seventy percent of the works come directly from the family and the rest from collectors. There are perhaps a few [pieces] I would have loved to have, but we have a wonderful group."

For Mitterrand, regardless of the exhibition checklist's specifics, the through line from past to present is abundantly clear. "They have always worked in the tradition of the great French artists and decorators," he notes of Les Lalanne. At another point, he reflects: "[Trianon] is the beginning of romanticism and a new sensitivity to nature. The installation, [fittingly], is a romantic walk through the gardens." The perfect activity for any idyllic summer day, it seems.



*Les Nouveaux Moutons, Brebis*, from 1994, blend in perfectly.



A donkey, or Ane Bâté, which dates back to the 1980's.



The tall standing rabbit, or *Lapin à Vent de Tourtour*.

# APOLLO

THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

## Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne: Nature Transformed

MAY 7, 2021



Grand Rhinocéros V (1988/91), François-Xavier Lalanne. Photo: Damien Perronnet/Art Digital Studio/Sotheby's;  
© 2021 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

This display at the Clark Art Institute is the first museum survey of 'Les Lalanne' since Claude Lalanne died – 11 years after her husband – in 2019. Though they often exhibited together, the couple rarely collaborated; while each drew on close observation of the natural world to create fantastical sculptures, Claude would veer to the surreal, with works such as her famous *Choupattes* (cabbages raised on chickens' feet), and François-Xavier to the more utilitarian, as with his large copper desks in the form of a rhinoceros. The exhibition is on display at the museum in Williamstown, Massachusetts, from 8 May–31 October; find out more from the Clark's website.



Choupatte (2017), Claude Lalanne. © 2021 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris



Histoires naturelles, Héron (2006/10), François-Xavier Lalanne. Photo: André Morin, courtesy Galerie Mitterrand, Paris; © 2021 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris



La Dormeuse (2004), Claude Lalanne. © 2021 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

# Galerie

## Interior Designer Brian McCarthy Curates a Magical Les Lalanne Exhibition at Kasmin

A collection of 20 artworks provides an immersive look into the legendary French artists' unique practice

JACQUELINE TERREBONE  
SEPTEMBER 18, 2020



Les Lalanne exhibition at Kasmin.

Visiting the new exhibition on the work of Les Lalanne, which recently opened at Kasmin gallery on Tenth Avenue in New York, is like stepping into another world. Not just because it's been months since many have walked into a Chelsea gallery, but also because of the thoughtful curation executed by interior designer Brian McCarthy. Far from the typical white-cube experience, McCarthy has conjured a forest of green walls in which to display a selection of 20 surreal sculptures and furnishings by the legendary French artists Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne, who lived and worked together for some five decades.

"This show is everything that everyone needs right now," McCarthy tells *Galerie*. "You walk in and feel like you're in a bear hug." That feeling of warmth and happiness comes from the design and the whimsical, imaginative flora- and

fauna-driven artworks, each of which is perched on its own special pedestal at varying heights. “Coming out of this surrealist moment in time, they created their own habitat and environment.”



Claude Lalanne, *Choupatte*, 2014.

Albert Hadley was the skyline of the room. The point in making maquettes is that we could arrange it around the two spaces of the gallery and move things forward and backward. As you start putting things together, they all have their own dialogue. Some need more space than others. It’s like conducting a symphony.”

The show also gives a peek into their own personal spaces via large-scale photographs of the duo’s home and studio in Urly, France, shot by the gallery’s late founder, Paul Kasmin, who was a close collaborator and friend. “The photographs are incredible,” says McCarthy of the blowups in the gallery’s entry. “They’re so sumptuous and enveloping. I know Paul and Claude would be very happy with the way that this has been done.”

After receiving the available works for the show from the gallery, McCarthy made a preselection of pieces and then full-size maquettes to decide on the arrangement on pedestals. “One of the most pivotal lessons I learned from



Interior photography by Paul Kasmin animates the show.

Of all the pieces in the show, McCarthy would take home *Choupatte* (2014). “It’s fabulous. That’s the piece I would want and would regret never buying one,” says the designer, who already has several pieces in his personal collection. “I love the quality of fantasy of their work. How can you ever tire of something like that?”

Everyone who enters is offered their own Alice in Wonderland moment, absorbing the warmth and imagination of not only Les Lalanne but McCarthy's artful eye as well, imagining how they too may live with the pieces in an interior setting. After months of lockdown at home, it's a breath of fresh air in the form of a fantastical dream.



Claude Lalanne, *Banc Crocodile*, 2014.



From Left: François-Xavier Lalanne, *Wapati Petit*, 1988; Claude Lalanne, *Lapin Debout*, 2012.

# The First Major Posthumous Show of Les Lalanne is Here

Thanks in large part to Lalanne confidant and AD100 designer Brian J. McCarthy, who curated the Kasmin Gallery exhibition

CARLY OLSON

SEPTEMBER 10, 2020



Inside the gallery. Photo: Courtesy of Kasmin Gallery.

Ask AD100 designer Brian J. McCarthy about the work of Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne, and his sentences speed up with excitement. “The many times that I went to the workshops in their house, it always struck me as being like Noah’s Ark,” McCarthy says. “There was something so wonderfully alive about the experience.” Aesthetes can’t get enough of the surreal works of Les Lalanne, known for their otherworldly nature-inspired sculptures that tread the line between art and design. Though their oeuvre is expansive—from Claude’s mirrors dripping in gilded flora to François-Xavier’s multipurpose bronze monkeys—each piece is imbued with a quintessential playful spirit.

McCarthy was called on to curate a show of the late artists’ work at Kasmin Gallery in New York, which opens September 10 on Tenth Avenue by appointment. The Kasmin exhibition is the first posthumous showing for the artists—Claude died in 2019. François-Xavier in 2008—and brings together a range of pieces from different periods of their practices. It also serves as a preview of sorts for the pair’s first institutional U.S. show since 1966, which is set to open at the Clark Art Institute in spring 2021.

The Kasmin team tapped McCarthy in part due to his personal connection to Les Lalanne. McCarthy cultivated a deep relationship with Claude, and worked with her to create many custom pieces for his clients. “I was absolutely

delighted,” he says of this new curatorial venture. “I’ve never done anything like this before, so it was a fun, different kind of challenge.”



A rare Lalanne owl sculpture. François-Xavier Lalanne, *Chouette de Tourtour*, 1992/2002, bronze. Photo: Christopher Stach.

As an interior designer, McCarthy is no stranger to creating transporative spaces. For this show, he revamped the gallery into a lush dreamscape inspired by Claude and François-Xavier’s legendary countryside home and studio space in Ury, France. Rambling yet dense, with works pouring out of the studios and into the garden, their home in north-central France became synecdoche for the pair’s artistic philosophy: that there need not be a boundary between art and life. As the late Paul Kasmin himself wrote in *Claude & François-Xavier Lalanne* (Skira Rizzoli), his biography on the pair published in 2012, “After going through a pair of large wooden gates, I immediately entered the world of Les Lalanne.... The feeling of being swallowed in the Lalannes’ world is almost instant; the house a vibrant workshop, the gardens a living museum.”

McCarthy sought to capture this environment by eschewing the white-box gallery setting in favor of a lively garden-inspired backdrop. He printed large-scale photographs of Les Lalanne’s Ury home that Kasmin shot for the biography, using them as context for the works, which are arranged on pedestals and on the floor. He also painted some walls a rich green with abstract branch motifs, like a forest. “We’ve created this sort of wooded background in the main part of the gallery that’s in shades of green,” McCarthy explains. “So you’re really going to be walking into this world of Lalanne in a different way than the gallery and museum experience.”

It’s no secret that the work of Les Lalanne has been prized for years, and buyers can’t get enough. Last year’s white glove sale of the couple’s personal collection achieved \$101.5 million at Sotheby’s Paris, and a set of François-Xavier’s sheep sculptures is a seven-figure design trophy. Of course, it’s not all about the money—as McCarthy explains, there is nothing else quite like the surrealist sculptures.



Outdoors at the studio of Les Lalanne in Ury, France. Photo: Paul Kasmin / © 2020 Les Lalanne / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Courtesy of Kasmin Gallery

Paul Kasmin was a longtime champion of the duo, and McCarthy wanted to honor their enduring relationship with the gallery. When selecting the works for the show, he drew from multiple periods, not just the greatest hits. (Though, with a body of work as celebrated as theirs, no work has truly been unseen.) A *Chouette de Tourtour* by François-Xavier will hold court among Claude's Ginkgo and Crocodile pieces. Visitors can also feast their eyes on jewelry, mirrors, and a deliciously patinated *Choupatte* by Claude, plus a bronze tortoise topiary creation by François-Xavier.

McCarthy wants visitors to the show to feel energized by the work of Les Lalanne. Though it's a posthumous exhibit, the works still feel as relevant and alive as ever. In fact, McCarthy's last—and biggest—project with Claude is still under way. Five years in, he wishes she could have seen the finished result. For a two-story room—with walls painted with Russian folktale scenes—McCarthy commissioned Claude to design staircase railings, the chandelier, and more than a dozen sconces. "The collaboration with Claude was just sheer magic," McCarthy says. "It was so perfectly in her wheelhouse. It's poetry, when you see it installed." The project is expected to be finished by Christmas.



A look inside the workspace of the duo. Photo: Paul Kasmin / © 2020 Les Lalanne / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Courtesy of Kasmin Gallery

# AD

## Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne Work on View in a Maze-Like Exhibition at Kasmin

*At Kasmin Gallery in New York, 45 objects by François-Xavier and Claude Lalanne see the light—in an installation designed by Louis Benech*

Carly Olson  
January 26, 2019



Designed by Louis Benech, Les Lalannes is newly open at Kasmin. Christopher Stach.

It's a gray winter morning, and I'm laying on the floor of Kasmin Gallery gazing up at the underbelly of a table. Strangely, nothing about this feels inappropriate. It's an ideal angle to admire fine details—the tactile quality of its round tabletop, a gilt bronze snake weaving up one leg, the bruised-apple red of galvanized copper leaves. Plus, director Edith Dicconson is doing little to discourage my behavior, even in one of New York's most respected galleries. After all, she, too, is obsessed with the nuance within this work and other pieces of Claude Lalanne's, which

are shown alongside designs by her late husband, François-Xavier, in Kasmin's new exhibition on the legendary pair, which opened yesterday. Simply titled *Les Lalanne*, the show brings together 45 of their sculptures from François-Xavier's ever-popular moutons and freakishly photogenic marble *oiseau* chairs to fanciful mirrors and lighting by Claude, who is still working at 94 years old.



Pieces in situ at Kasmin. The leaf-topped table, chandelier, and candelabras are by Claude Lalanne. Christopher Stach.

Regardless of one's understanding of the art and design worlds, it's not hard to appreciate—or, at least, enjoy—the Lalannes' work. "Everything is very playful and whimsical yet serves a purpose—and it's made to be used," says Dicconson, who is the leading director of the Lalanne exhibition. "So everything is made very very well and has stood the test of time." Inspired by flora and fauna, the objects have no shortage of personality.

This exhibition marks another exciting leap of sorts for the relationship between Kasmin and the Lalannes. Paul Kasmin himself was the first to show the Lalannes' work in the United States—and has shown them many times since—and now, 30 years after Kasmin's opening, this exhibition is staged in the gallery's newest space on 27th Street in Manhattan, which opened last fall.



*Oiseaux de marbre* chairs by François-Xavier Lalanne, at the Paris residence of Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé. A set of these chairs is also in the Les Lalanne exhibition at Kasmin. Photo: Paul Kasmin.

To put an architectural spin on the setting for the objects, Kasmin called on garden guru and AD100 Hall-of-Famer Louis Benech to turn the space into a labyrinth-meets-white-box-gallery and help curate the selection of objects. Walking through the double-height doors, one is only confronted with a bulbous bronze apple and 10-foot-tall mirror, both by Claude. "He's broken up the entire gallery space to make it feel intimate, so he's divided it into alleyways with a forced perspective," explains Dicconson. "So when you enter the show, you see an apple and a mirror on the far wall...the rest you have to discover behind the walls he's built." Behind each wall exists a small vignette with themed objects, from Claude's crocodile furniture to François-Xavier's myriad primates (including a standout *babouin*—a functional fireplace in the belly of a cast iron baboon).



François-Xavier Lalanne, *Babouin*, 1984/1990, cast iron. Christopher Stach.

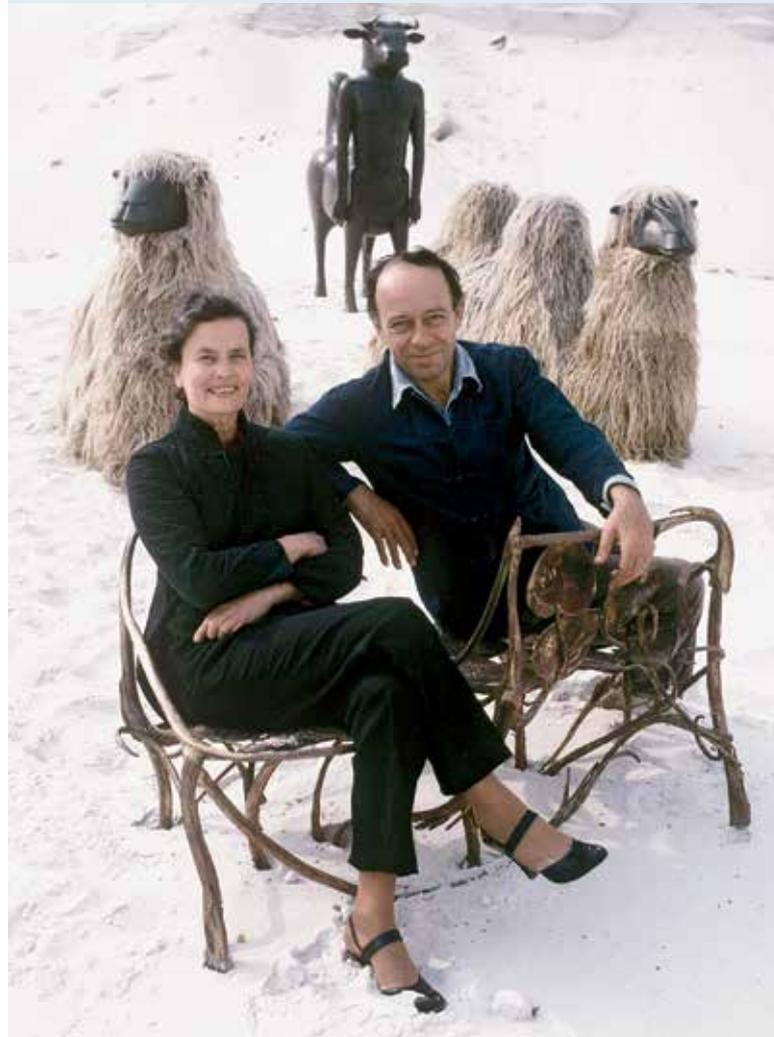
It's no secret that the Lalannes have had a cult following for decades, no doubt spurred by a combination of the joy their works exude and the star power of their top collectors. (Rectangular *miroirs* of Claude's design were installed in Yves Saint Laurent's famous "room of mirrors" in Paris; one from that same series is offered in the Kasmin exhibition.) In the past decade, the prices these works command at auction have skyrocketed—François-Xavier's moutons tend to fetch about a quarter million dollars each, and a suite of Claude's crocodile furniture raked in over \$4 million at Sotheby's in 2017. And the pieces at Kasmin range from \$145,000 to \$2.5 million.

Though these prices render the works unattainable for most, a parallel universe exists in Ury, France, where Claude lives in a rambling home studio surrounded by dozens, perhaps hundreds, of these pieces. A large-scale bronze *Singe Avise* monkey by François-Xavier shares a sprightly overgrown garden with a patinated *Choupatte*, Claude's iconic cabbage with chicken's feet. Concrete moutons stand among weeds in a cobblestone court. Bronze objets are paperweights for scratchpad notes. "It's just an unbelievable way that she lives with such ease and with their objects around," says Dicconson. "As many books as I look through, as many objects as I see, I can't get enough."

# Following

How did the whimsical creations of Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne go from being insider favorites of the art and fashion set to sought-after objects of astronomical value? *by Pilar Viladas*

## the Flock



**FROM THEIR FIRST** joint exhibition of sculpture in 1967, Claude Lalanne and her husband, François-Xavier Lalanne (who died in 2008 at age 81), may have confounded some in the art world—their work was, for the most part, meant to be used—but they also attracted a devoted following. Among their iconic works are François-Xavier’s woolly sheep sculptures (known as *Moutons de Laine*), which double as ottomans; his *Rhinocrétaire*, a massive bronze rhinoceros that is also a desk; Claude’s *Choupattes*, bronze cabbages perched on chicken feet; and her bronze-and-copper chandeliers of

Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne on Claude’s *Love Seat*, in a sand quarry near their home in 1976.

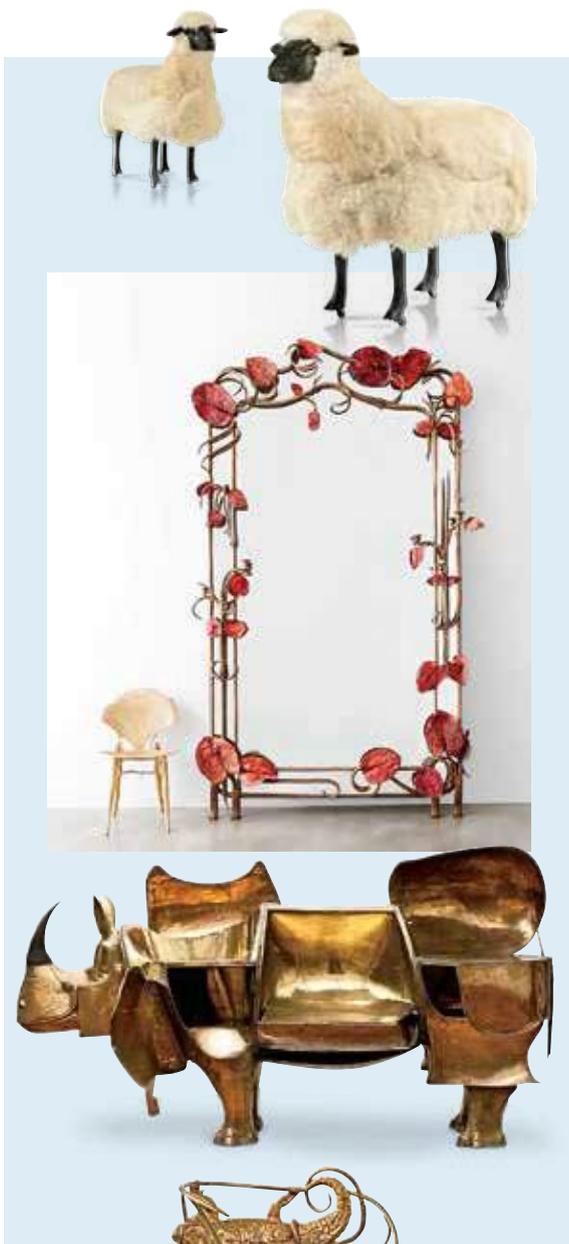
entwined branches adorned with butterflies. (While the couple seldom collaborated, they branded themselves collectively as Les Lalanne early on.) These surrealist-tinged, nature-inspired works, which are both mysterious and whimsical, clicked with sophisticated collectors like Guy and Marie-Hélène de Rothschild; Yves Saint Laurent and his partner, Pierre Bergé; and Jane Holzer, who bought her first pair of sheep in 1967. The decorators Jacques Grange and François Catroux and the architect Peter Marino spread the Lalanne gospel by introducing the artists to their clients and by collecting the work themselves. (Marino’s collection includes more than 40 of the Lalannes’ outdoor sculptures.) Tom Ford and Reed and Delphine Krakoff likewise fell in love with the work, and by the early 2000s, these tastemakers’ stamps of approval had helped expand the Lalanne market beyond a small circle of connoisseurs, pushing prices into the six figures.

But those days seem quaint now. Last September at Christie’s in Paris, a rather unassuming low table made by Claude in 2008 sold for \$1 million as part of the estate sale of the great decorator Alberto Pinto. Then, in November at a Sotheby’s auction of Grange’s collections of art and design, one of François-Xavier’s *Les Atruches*—a bar that features two ostriches made of Sèvres porcelain—sold for \$7.6 million, more than six times its high estimate. A pair of 1969 *Moutons de Laine* brought \$1.85 million. The day before the Sotheby’s sale, Christie’s sold a large bronze and copper mirror by Claude, framed with branches and leaves, for around \$2.1 million. And the market shows no signs of cooling. “As prices go up,” says Paul Kasmin, who, along with Ben Brown in London and Jean-Gabriel Mitterand in Paris, is one of the premier dealers of the

artists' work, "more and more people want Lalanne and don't care where they get it."

Prices for the Lalannes' work had been rising steadily through the 2000s, but for art-market observers, the turning point was Christie's 2009 auction of Saint Laurent and Bergé's collections of art and furniture. A new generation of collectors, says Sonja Ganne, Christie's international head of design, saw the opportunity to be "a part of history, of someone's taste." Hence an abstract, sculptural bronze bar that Saint Laurent commissioned from François-Xavier in 1965 sold for \$3.5 million, while an ensemble of 15 mirrors Claude made for Saint Laurent and Bergé's Paris music room fetched \$2.4 million. An exhibition the following year of the Lalannes' work at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, curated by Marino, fanned the flames even further. And in 2012, Christie's sold a flock of ten epoxy-stone sheep for a record \$7.5 million. As Suzanne Demisch, a partner in the gallery Demisch Danant, observes, "The sheep just go, go, go—they're a symbol of an era of connoisseurship."

**BUT LONG BEFORE** the era of coveted sheep, it was a heady time for the art world. In the 1950s, when the Lalannes had their studio in the Impasse Roncin, a decrepit Parisian cul-de-sac, their neighbors included an elderly Constantin Brancusi, who would stop by in the evenings with cigarettes and liquor. They designed window displays for Christian Dior, where they met Saint Laurent, who later incorporated body parts—cast by Claude from the supermodel Veruschka—into his 1969 Empreintes collection. The Lalannes came from very different artistic backgrounds. François-Xavier was a classically trained painter, and his stint as a guard in the Louvre's Egyptian galleries may have



From top: François-Xavier's 1969 two *Moutons de Laine* that sold last year at Sotheby's for \$1.85 million; Claude's 1993 *Miroir* at the Paul Kasmin Gallery in 2017; *Rhinocéros II*, shown at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in 2010; a *Crocodile* chair that sold at Sotheby's for \$975,000 in December.

influenced the monumental quality of his bronze creatures. Animals, he said, "are the only beings through whom one can enter another world." Claude came from a musical family and studied architecture before turning to sculpture, which for her was more about finding forms, like leaves and flowers, that captured her imagination. "The best way to explain something is to do it," she declared in a 1974 interview in *Elle*.

But the couple's art seems to strike a universal chord. Reed Krakoff, now the artistic director at Tiffany & Co., became such a fan of the Lalannes—for them, he says, "life, work, and art are inseparable"—that he published a book on their oeuvre in 2007 with Kasmin and Brown. His and Delphine's favorite pieces are two *Pommes Bouche*—bronze apples with human lips—for which Claude made casts of their mouths. Holzer, who in the '70s had a company that made furniture by artists, produced François-Xavier's foam-and-leather bed

in the form of a can of sardines. "I still have a couple of the sardines," she says, and she's still buying the Lalannes' work. "It's like a drug."

The New York designer Brian J. McCarthy uses the same comparison, adding that the work "moves in and becomes part of the family." McCarthy is collaborating with Claude on a commission for a house in Switzerland that includes a staircase, railings, and chandeliers. He notes that Claude, now in her 90s, is still working at the Lalannes' farm in Ury, France, turning out pieces at a fast clip. "Everybody is clamoring for inventory," he notes. (François-Xavier's work, by comparison, is far more scarce.) But no matter how much money is chasing how few pieces, one fact doesn't seem to change. As Kasmin says, "At the end of the day, there's so little art that goes that deep into people's psyche."

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

## ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

February, 2017

*object lesson* THE STORY BEHIND AN ICONIC DESIGN

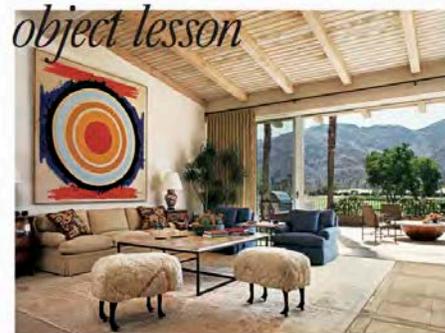
### Herd Mentality

The whimsical allure and enduring popularity of artist *François-Xavier Lalanne's* 1960s sheep sculptures



FRANÇOIS-XAVIER LALANNE AND HIS WIFE, CLAUDE, PICTURED IN 1965, WATCH OVER A FLOCK OF THE LEGENDARY MOUTONS DE LAINE, WHICH WERE AS MUCH SEATING AS THEY WERE SCULPTURE.

WILLY RIZZO



LEFT LALANNE STOOLS IN SINGER ANDY WILLIAMS'S CALIFORNIA LIVING ROOM.



KODAK 400NC-3 49

ABOVE VALENTINO, IN GSTAAD, SWITZERLAND, WITH HIS MENAGERIE OF PUGS (REAL) AND SHEEP (LALANNE).



A WEATHER-RESISTANT LALANNE TRIO AT INVESTOR WILBUR ROSS'S HOME IN SOUTHAMPTON, NEW YORK.

LEFT YVES SAINT LAURENT AND PIERRE BERGÉ'S PARIS LIBRARY.



BELOW DESIGNER REED KRAKOFF'S LONG ISLAND HOUSE.



PHOTO TOP: DAVID GLOBE; LILIAN WISSMAN; HORST P. HOHSTENDE; MISE: ERIC PUSECKI; FRANCIS HALAND

**F**or the 1965 Salon de la Jeune Peinture in Paris, French artist François-Xavier Lalanne wanted to make a statement. "If you come with a snail as big as a thumb, nobody notices," he said. "You have to go with something immodest and slightly embarrassing." His idea? Twenty-four sheep. Lalanne fashioned the faux livestock in the living room of the Paris apartment he shared with Claude, his wife and artistic partner. Four sculptures received impassive faces of patinated bronze while the others remained headless; all were swathed in fluffy sheepskins. Les Lalannes then trotted the surrealistic herd off to the storied Palais de Tokyo

exhibition hall, where the *moutons*—making their grand debut as art furniture, complete with casters in their hooves for easy mobility—were placed prominently at the salon's entrance.

*Le Tout-Paris* was charmed and covetous. "Having a sheep in your living room, as opposed to an armchair or a wood bench, is just pure fun," says garden designer Madison Cox, a longtime friend of the Lalannes.

That fun was as instantaneous as it has been enduring. (And pricey: In 2011 a group of ten sheep fetched nearly \$7.5 million at Christie's.) Several were commissioned by Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé, who positioned them throughout their Paris library. "[They help me] pretend I am on a farm in Normandy," the couturier wistfully observed. And when Adelaide de Menil got wind of artist William Copley's third divorce, in the 1970s, she sent her condolences: a rare black sheep to add to his collection. "I always prefer them in a big mass," says decorator François Catroux, who recently gathered a trio in a Paris apartment. Architect Peter Marino remembers when François-Xavier asked what was his favorite mythological tale: "Without hesitation, I said, 'The Golden Fleece,' and he answered, 'I shall make you an entire flock.'" Cast in bronze, the *Moutons de Peter* now stand on his Hamptons lawn year-round and graze, just like the ruminants that inspired them. —HANNAH MARTIN

PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

FINANCIAL TIMES

# how to spend it

SEPTEMBER 3 2016



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Claude Lalanne in the garden of her home near Fontainebleau, with two of her 2012 bronze *La Femme du Crocodile* sculptures

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## oooh LALANNE

Claude Lalanne has been springing sculptural surprises since the 1960s, but only in the past decade has there been a surge in international interest. **Helen Chislett** has an exclusive at-home audience with the artist on the eve of two exhibitions. Portraits by **Léa Crespi**

**O**n Claude Lalanne's coffee table stands a tiny bronze cabbage on chicken legs – you would need a heart of stone not to smile at the wit and joy in that little *Choupatte* (Cabbage Feet). Made as a gift for her late husband, François-Xavier, it perfectly encapsulates the artist's love of nature and her sense of play. *Choupatte* is now famous, with versions included in museum and art collections across the globe, but Lalanne admits that the first – this very one – was nothing but a happy accident. "I had taken a mould of a cabbage and just wondered what it would look like with legs – the moment I saw it, it felt right. It had emotion." As François-Xavier once declared: "The cabbage leaf is to Claude what the acanthus leaf was to Greek art!"

This year, Christie's in Paris sold a 1996 woven branch-like chandelier by Claude, *Lustre Structure Végétale* (pictured overleaf) for €1,833,500 – about six times the estimate. It elegantly illustrates that 2016 is becoming something of a high point for Claude. This autumn, Ben Brown Fine Arts is organising two shows by Les Lalanne – the name that melds Claude and François-Xavier's highly individual bodies of work into a single title – one in Hong Kong, opening on September 16, and another in London, opening in November. In New York on October 27, Paul Kasmin (who was introduced to the work of Les Lalanne through Brown) is also including their works in a group show: *Impasse Ronsin* – named after the Paris artistic community that they were a part of – and which includes works by Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely, Max Ernst and James (Jimmy) Metcalf, alongside a small blue *choupatte* and a crocodile chair by Claude, and a *mouton* by François-Xavier (prices from \$300,000 to \$1m). Meanwhile, earlier this year, Jean-Gabriel Mitterrand, who has worked with Les Lalanne in France for 40 years, staged a show of their work, while London-based artist-jewellery gallerist Louisa Guinness, Ben Brown's wife, held the first show of Claude's jewellery. Here, pieces "sold

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



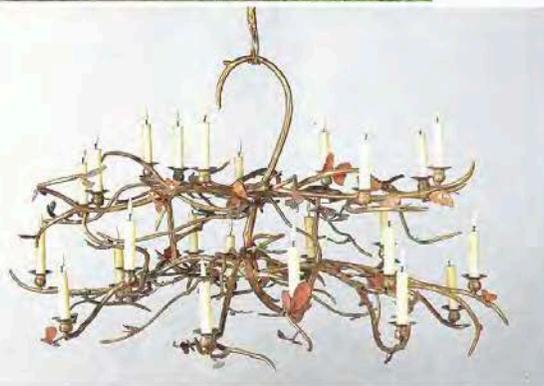
Clockwise from left: Claude Lalanne with her 2016 bronze *Choupatte Géante*, price on request, a pair of her 2015 bronze *Fauteuils Entrelacs* armchairs, price on request, all available at Ben Brown Fine Arts. Her 1996 gilt bronze and galvanized copper *Lustre Structure Végétale* chandelier, sold at Christie's for €1,833,500



*"Supply is going down as fewer of François-Xavier's pieces come to market and Claude is producing less – but demand internationally is ratcheting up"*

strongly across the board to a range of global collectors", says Guinness, "with particular interest in the new, unique works created especially for the show", such as the wrapped vine necklace *Collier Groseilles* (€60,000, pictured overleaf), a dahlia brooch (€7,200), and a beautiful butterfly ring (€6,000, pictured overleaf).

But it is the Ben Brown shows that will surely most excite, with their important, well-documented Les Lalanne pieces – such as a striking dining table with deer legs by François-Xavier, *Table aux Pieds de Cerf* – and both historic and new work from Claude, including romantically garlanded *Miroirs*, the surreal *Osiris* (pictured overleaf) with cast crocodile-leg base, a pair of *Fauteuils Crocodile* (one pictured on final page), this time with a crocodile crawling around the back of the chair, and a pair of *Fauteuils Entrelacs* (pictured top right), armchairs poetically wrought from interwoven bronze leaves of ginkgo. All prices are on request, but it is worth noting that a *Fauteuil Crocodile* (an armchair in copper, bronze and brass) dating from 1972 sold at Sotheby's Paris in 2012 for €1,352,750, roughly eight times the estimate. Four years have passed and prices for Lalanne have moved only northwards. As Brown says: "Supply is going down as fewer of François-Xavier's pieces are coming to market and Claude herself is producing less than she used to – but meanwhile demand internationally is ratcheting



up. Usually I expect to sell out of a show after six months – with Les Lalanne it is three."

Incredibly, until as recently as 2007, there had been no Lalanne show in London for over 30 years – between the Whitechapel Gallery exhibition of 1976 and the first (of what will soon be three) at Ben Brown Fine Arts. The dramatic turning point in international recognition came in 2009, when Christie's held a sale of Yves Saint Laurent's possessions following his death. This included the unique *Bar YSL* of brass and crystal glass by François-Xavier and Claude's *Salon des Miroirs*. In both cases, the work of Les Lalanne exceeded 10 times the reserve price, sending their work spiralling into figures of which they would never

have dreamed. Of reaching such success in her mid-80s, Claude says, "It was incredible, formidable – for a long time we had worked with so little real interest being shown in our work." This was rectified in 2010, with a major retrospective at Paris's Musée des Arts Décoratifs designed by one of their most ardent fans, the architect Peter Marino, who owns around 40 pieces and says of the "really wondrous" Claude that he loves "her surreal, humorous combination of natural forms with her own highly refined aesthetic".

For passionate lovers of all things Lalanne – myself included – the journey from Paris to Les Lalanne's rarely accessed, higgledy-piggledy assortment of farm buildings near Fontainebleau, tucked discreetly behind village walls, is quite simply as good as it gets. It is here that Claude and François-Xavier lived and worked – side by side, but in separate studios – for nearly half a century. From the moment I step through the gates, heralded by the barks of Lalanne's three dogs, it is hard not to gape at what lies in the courtyard beyond. I look one way and my eye is caught by a 2m high bear, I look another and my gaze settles on an enormous gorilla, both iconic works by François-Xavier. Glimpsing through to the garden I can see giant red apples (her), tables of ginkgo leaves (her), crocodile seats (her) and a veritable menagerie of owls, birds, lizards, apes and black-faced sheep (him).

François-Xavier died in 2008, but Claude is as driven to create as ever, although at the age of 91 she does

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# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



*"Like Louise Bourgeois, Claude shows no sign of diminishing as an artist now she is in her 90s"*

Clockwise from left: Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne in 1976 with his 1970 iron *Le Minotaure*. Claude's 2016 18ct-gold *Collier Groseilles*, €60,000, 2016 gilt bronze *Papillon Ring*, €6,000, and 2015 bronze *Osriris*, price on request

admit to finding some of the work rather heavy to handle. Happily, she is helped by her daughter, Caroline, granddaughter, Julie, Julie's husband, Darius Metcalf, and a handful of other assistants. A tiny brunette *moineau* who chirrup her answers half in French and half in English, Claude does not disappoint in the flesh. Today she is wearing sturdy worker's boots, bright red woollen socks and jeans – occasionally she lights a slim roll-up with Gallic nonchalance.

Claude's enchanted garden is much more than a backdrop to the weird and wonderful genius of Les Lalanne. It is the physical source of her inspiration. A keen horticulturalist since childhood, she plants the seeds from which she grows flowers, fruit and vegetables – and then uses them as a blueprint for her creations: "I never stop walking in the garden, looking at what is there and using what I grow."

For her work, Claude uses the electroplating process that was first discovered in the 18th century by the Bolognese physicist Luigi Galvani (hence galvanisation), and that was taught to her by fellow artist Jimmy Metcalf – the father of Claude's grandson-in-law Darius. Objects gathered from her garden are placed in a bath of sulphuric acid and copper sulphate, through which an electric current is flowed, resulting in a mould of thin copper. She then refines the object through hours of hand-tooling, harmonising the original form with her own poetic interpretation.

Her artistic expression has changed little over the past 50 years, but this does not make her any less exciting or relevant as an artist. As Brown says, "Claude found her language a long time ago, but that doesn't mean she has lost the ability to surprise. For this show, she has produced *Choupatie Géante* [price on request, pictured on previous page], which is a stonking sculpture – mind-blowing and fabulous. When I saw it for the first time, I



told her I think it's the best thing she has ever done: absolutely incredible. Like Louise Bourgeois, she shows no sign of diminishing as an artist just because she is now in her 90s. She is still a workaholic who is in her studio every day – starting while the rest of us are probably having breakfast." Claude shrugs this off with: "I like to be busy. There is great satisfaction to be had from working hard."

Claude herself is rather pleased with this new body of work. "It has been very difficult at times – in particular making *Choupatie Géante*, because it is so heavy and each leaf had to be made separately over many months. I think my husband would have been rather amazed by it."

François-Xavier once famously declared that "painting is finished", and certainly one thing that set Les Lalanne apart from the beginning was the way they combined

modern methods with traditional craftsmanship to create what Metcalf once described as "objects to live with". While that notion of design art is very on-trend now – look no further than the artistic fodder of international shows such as Design Miami/ Basel and PAD – it was radical back in the early 1960s, when the postwar art scene in Paris had long been dominated by abstraction. To an extent, Les Lalanne lived a life deliberately out of step with contemporaneous influences, innocently and joyfully determining their own parallel paths. Claude herself says, "the words artist and artisan have the same roots. Why should one be more important than the other? There is no hierarchy." It is a viewpoint that has also encouraged her to produce works that range in scale and purpose from jewellery to furniture to sculpture.

The pair met in 1952 at François-Xavier's first exhibition of paintings at Galerie Cimaïse on Boulevard Raspail in Paris. They had both been married before: he had one daughter; she three. It was not love at first sight – "I did not like him straight away," recalls Claude – but it did not take long for François-Xavier to change her mind.

He was then living at number 11 on the aforementioned Impasse Ronsin, a modest – now legendary – community of artists who were drawn to the north-facing studios dotted around the tree-filled courtyards of this corner of Montparnasse. Claude (née Dupeux), born and raised in Paris to a musician mother and a gold-broker father, studied architecture at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and later attended external classes in drawing, clay modelling and casting. By the time she met François-Xavier and moved into the Impasse Ronsin, she was keen to spread her artistic wings once more and together they began working on collaborations.

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



From top: Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne in 2007. Claude's 2014 bronze *Fauteuil Crocodile*, price on request

François-Xavier once compared them to musicians, saying: "My wife would improvise while I would have to write out my part before playing it."

However intertwined their art may appear, there were always in fact two separate careers running in tandem. For a while they did share a studio, but Claude insisted on having her own when François-Xavier said he did not like this or that, "because then I would undo everything and start again. It was the same for him. We were in tune with each other and yet also very distinct." That is not to say they never collaborated – joint pieces included *Le Grand Centaure* (the Large Centaur) for the French embassy in New Delhi, 1985, and a topiary dinosaur structure (1989) that stands guard in the garden.

While their artistic reputations grew within their own circle, it was not until legendary gallerist Alexander Iolas began to exhibit their work in 1966 that they started to attract the attention of serious art collectors, as opposed to relying on commissions from interior designers. Their close friends included René Magritte, Max Ernst and Victor Brauner, who also showed with Iolas. The fashion designer Valentino Garavani was first introduced to the work of Les Lalanne through Marie-Hélène de Rothschild, who gave him a beautiful frame Claude had made. "Everything she does, I love – she is poetic, romantic, artistic and absolutely unique," he says.

Other key collectors of Lalanne include fashion designers Tom Ford, Karl Lagerfeld and Marc Jacobs, as well as French business magnates François-Henri Pinault, CEO and chairman of Kering, and Bernard Arnault, chairman and CEO of LVMH. However, if there was one figure who was to influence the careers of Les Lalanne both in life and from beyond the grave, it was Yves Saint Laurent. Inspired by Claude's series of *Pomme Bouche* (Apple Mouth) in solid gold and by the *Bracelet Bouche* (Bracelet Mouth) of "stolen kisses", Saint Laurent

*Yves Saint Laurent commissioned 25 mirrors for the alcoves of his grand salon, while Salvador Dalí requested a snail-encrusted cutlery set*

commissioned Claude to mould the breasts and hips of the legendary model Veruschka for his autumn 1969 haute couture collection. These gilded *empreintes* were then paired with diaphanous, Greek-style drapery, transforming catwalk models into shimmering metallic statuary. He also commissioned 25 mirrors between 1974 and 1985 for the alcoves of his private grand salon on the Rue de Babylone, which created the impression of a room hung with golden vines. Another notable commission came from Salvador Dalí, who requested a snail-encrusted

cutlery set – for which he attempted to take all the credit. For all of this, Claude says she never felt financially secure until she reached the age of 70 – a remarkable admission given the collectability of Les Lalanne today. "They had huge early recognition through Iolas, but then spent nearly 20 years out in the wilderness. What is wonderful is to see how they have been rediscovered

and reappraised once more," says Brown. "If you have not seen a Lalanne show but think you know their work, you're wrong. It is not about one piece here or there. It is about stepping over the threshold and entering a whole Lalanne world."

The concept of a Lalanne wonderland both amuses and flatters Claude. So is all of this creativity the result of vivid dreams? "I dream when I am awake," she says. "There is nothing left over by night." For the artist herself, sitting in her light-filled sitting room surrounded by mouton sculptures and dogs, where a small plastic tourist toy of a waving Queen Elizabeth II is juxtaposed with a stately *Grue Lumineuse* (Luminous Crane), and the Yves Saint Laurent sale catalogue covers a hole in the carpet, to have such success is bittersweet in the absence of her beloved husband.



"It is difficult to be here without him, not so much artistically as personally. But I am happy because his spirit is all around me through his wonderful art. Everything brings a smile to the face." ✦

## KEEPING IT SURREAL

**Ben Brown Fine Arts**, 12 Brook's Mews, London W1 (020-7734 8888; [www.benbrownfinearts.com](http://www.benbrownfinearts.com)); **Les Lalanne**, November 23-January 26; and 303 Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Hong Kong (+852-2522 9600); September 16-November 9. **Galerie Mitterrand**, 79 Rue du Temple, 75003 Paris (+33-1-4326 1205; [www.galeriemitterrand.com](http://www.galeriemitterrand.com)). **Louisa Guinness Gallery**, 45 Conduit Street, London W1 (020-7494 4664; [www.louisaguinnessgallery.com](http://www.louisaguinnessgallery.com)). **Paul Kasmin Gallery**, 515 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001 (+1212-563 4474; [www.paulkasmingallery.com](http://www.paulkasmingallery.com)); *Impasse Ronsin*, October 27-December 23.

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



March 26, 2015

## Discovering Les Lalanne Anew in a Madison Cox-Designed Fun House

by Julie Baumgardner



“I loved Les Lalanne’s work before I met them,” the gallerist Paul Kasmin swoons about the artistic duo Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne, known simply as Les Lalanne. “I loved it even more after I met them.” Kasmin encountered and began representing the duo in 2006, and the last time he showed their work was in 2013, at a Shell Gas station on 10th Avenue: Sheep sculptures were installed on an Astroturf grass pasture, exposed to the elements and the public. This year, he’s tapping into the beloved French sculptors’ more mysterious side by bringing things indoors and recruiting the elusive garden magician Madison Cox to bring to life a maze of an exhibition.

293 TENTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10001 T: 212.563.4474 [PAULKASMINGALLERY.COM](http://PAULKASMINGALLERY.COM)

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



March 26, 2015



At 91, after 60 years of traversing the line between artist, designer and creative mischief maker, Claude is still churning out her whimsical mechanical sculptures of flora and fauna – not so much the much-in-demand sheep benches, but her neo-Surrealist bronzes and sculptural jewel designs. From the 1960s until François passed away six years ago, the partners in love and crime swirled and cast through Paris in one of the city’s most iconic creative circles, with Yves Saint Laurent, Pierre Bergé, Loulou de la Falaise and Constantin Brancusi. It so happens that Cox, too, was dear to Bergé, as his close confidant and design adviser. “I saw him create his gardens, especially in Yves’s house,” explains Claude of their shared close friend, Cox. “He arranged the Jardin Majorelle in Morocco. I have never seen anything so beautiful. Really.”

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



March 26, 2015

Now Claude and Cox are taking their friendship to the next level with a collaboration: “A labyrinth in which the visitor wanders and discovers the various pieces by Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne, as one might in a garden maze,” explains Cox, the concept’s mastermind. The installation opens today at the 27th Street outpost of Kasmin’s corner empire in Chelsea, and will be on view through May 2. True, the design draws inspiration from the grand salon in Saint Laurent and Bergé’s Paris abode that contained original works by Les Lalanne. But a copycat act this is not.



With 25 sculptures on display, cast from 1987 onward, the hall-of-mirrors fun house – quite literally, as the red room presents 13 illusion-creating mirrors over which Claude’s foliage-inspired “Lustres” hover, and the entrance is guarded by an owl and a spooky gate –

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



March 26, 2015

“contains that element of surprise and mystery, which I believe is always evident in works of both the Lalannes,” Cox explains. The surprise isn’t just found in the works — the collaboration itself is quite the rarity. “I would have liked to do other projects like this one but the opportunity has not presented itself. It was him who decided to do this!” Claude says in reference to Cox.



Claude, who admits “I always did what I liked, what I felt,” has found difficulties with co-collaborating in the past, but experienced quite the opposite with Cox. “We have the same vision. For me, I like things simple,” she says, “and he does not like when it’s too farfetched. I appreciate that.” That’s not to say the show lacks for any of the anticipated flash and whimsy. “There is always the sense of fairy tale in Claude’s work, a surrealist view of the

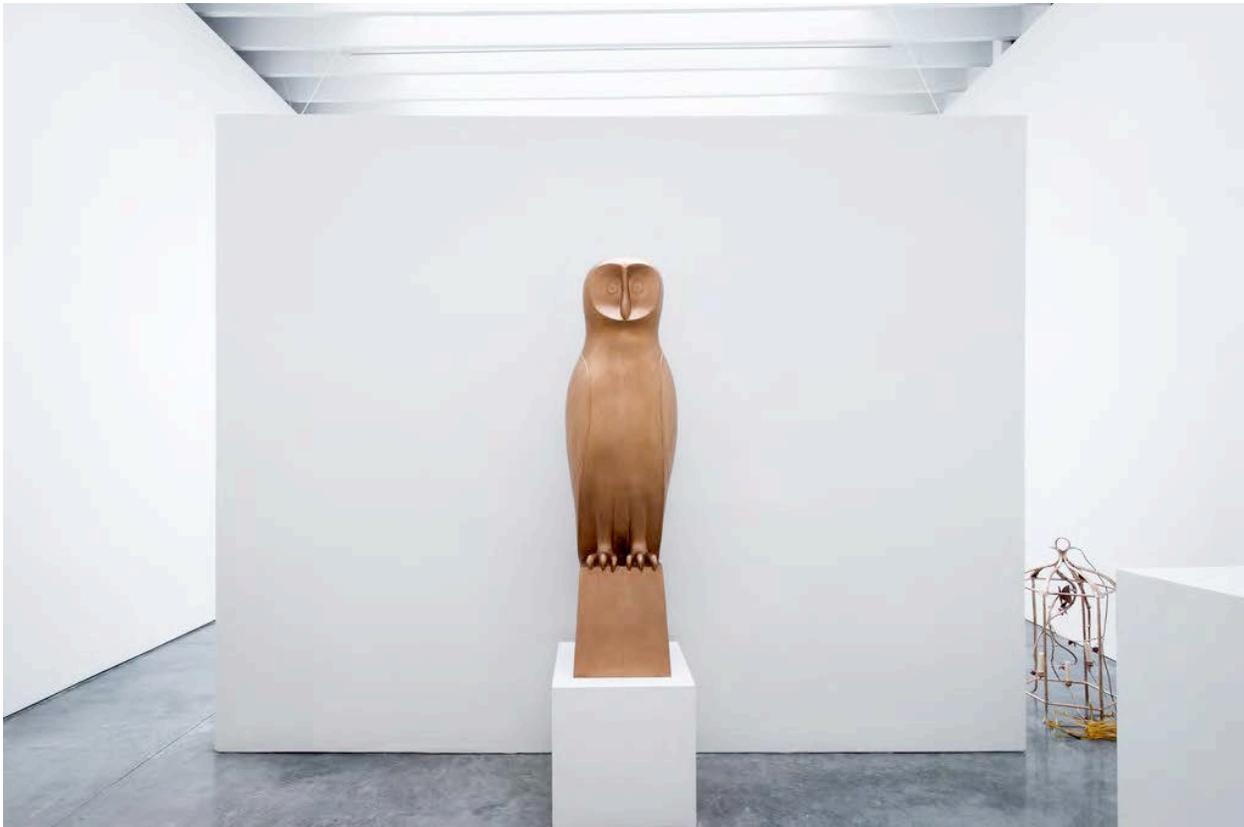
# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



March 26, 2015

world as we normally perceive it,” Cox says. “While many of us know some of her works, because they have become iconic for the past decades, here set within the context of a maze, there is the sense that seeing the pieces within a new context makes it interesting.” Claude, on the other hand, was rather surprised. “I don’t think I’ve changed so much,” she confides, but this time around, “We discover things, the character of the works from the point of view of others. It renews my vision of works.” Maybe the more things stay the same, the more they change?

*“Les Lalanne” will be on view through May 2 at Paul Kasmin Gallery, 515 West 27th Street, New York, [paulkasmingallery.com](http://paulkasmingallery.com).*



# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY CULTURED

MARCH 2015

## LALANNE, WITH LOVE

BY BROOK S. MASON



The somewhat surreal sculpture of Claude Lalanne and her late husband François-Xavier inspired by all things plucked from nature like tendrils of ivy and even animals such as stags have been in the forefront of style beginning when fashion designer Yves St. Laurent snared their quixotic bar for his home on the Left Bank in Paris. Now their oeuvre is front and center in a new exhibition, "Les Lalanne," staged by Chelsea dealer Paul Kasmin, running from March 26 to May 2.

What's decidedly different about this gallery show is the way their celebrated work is featured. Kasmin cleverly brought on landscape gardener extraordinaire Madison Cox whose clients include such noted figures as Marella Agnelli, Pierre Bergé and even former Mayor Michael Bloomberg to conjure up a labyrinth setting with élan. A pair of garden gates flanks the entrance.

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY CULTURED

MARCH 2015



Why so many bronze examples destined for a garden in a hipster gallery best known for cutting edge art and design by the likes of Will Ryman and Ron Arad? “There’s always been a groundswell of interest in garden sculpture in Europe,” says Kasmin. “And now it’s being replicated here” he says. Lalanne fanciers include Tom Ford and Peter Marino as well as Agnes Gund and Jane Holzer. Even the Russians have taken to Lalanne sheep.

“Madison and I have the same spirit and the same state of mind,” says Claude Lalanne who is now approaching 90 and has known Cox for more than 30 years.

“Madison and I have the same spirit and the same state of mind,” says Claude Lalanne who is now approaching 90 and has known Cox for more than 30 years.

In addition to rabbits and crocodile seating is her latest rendition of a suite of eighteen mirrors framed by lily pads, which no less than Pierre Bergé ordered up for the dining room of the pad he shared with St. Laurent for decades. “It’s the first time they’ve been produced,” says Kasmin of the mirrors, which cost in excess of \$100,000 each. By opening night, more than half of the examples had been sold.

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY CULTURED

MARCH 2015



Even so, smaller pieces by Lalanne with relatively modest prices by Lalanne can be found at the PK Bookstore like a delicate gilded silver bracelet topped by a butterfly in a signed edition of 50 for \$4,000. In addition, she has created the ultimate candle in which the candleholder is encased in honeysuckle tendrils for \$5,000.

But if you can't make it to this exhibition, grab the tome *Les Lalanne: Fifty Years of Work, 1964-2015* edited by critic Adrian Dannatt. Filled with archival photos by such leading lights

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

## CULTURED

MARCH 2015

as Guy Bourdin and François Halard, there are interviews and testimonials from Carla Fendi and Laurence Graff. “The Lalannes are visionaries,” says Dannatt. “After all, what other designers have received tribute from Brancusi right up to Marc Jacobs?”



# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

## The New York Times

September 10, 2013



LES LALANNE AND PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

### Herd of Artworks At Former Gas Station

In the High Line spirit of repurposing, the former Getty filling station in West Chelsea in Manhattan will become the site of a temporary public art program starting on Monday. The first show at the station — at 239 10th Avenue, at 24th Street near the High Line (the park along an elevated former rail line) — is “Sheep Station,” featuring the work of the surrealist sculptor François-Xavier Lalanne, who died in 2008. (Samples are above.) The exhibition, which runs through Oct. 20, will include 25 of his sheep made of epoxy stone and bronze. The show was conceived by **Paul Kasmin**, an art dealer who represents the Lalanne estate, and **Michael Shvo**, a real estate developer and collector. Mr. Shvo’s company purchased the Getty station with Victor Homes in 2013 and will turn it into luxury residences. The developers plan to present public art during the project’s construction and will incorporate similar projects into the building.

ROBIN POGREBIN

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

September 17, 2013

A24 | Tuesday, September 17, 2013

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

HEARD & SCENE

Sheepish at the Station



Alamy Images for The Wall Street Journal



Below, Michael Shvo, Claude Lalanne and Paul Kasmin at the gas station where sheep, above and left, have been installed as a public art project.



By MARSHALL HEYMAN



Chances are if you were hanging around West Chelsea over the past few days, you bumped into something unusual. The Getty station on 24th Street and 10th Avenue, only too recently a working Getty station, is now a public-art project.

Surrounded by a white picket fence, it features several sheep by François-Xavier Lalanne grazing on a grassy knoll. Perhaps the most amusing aspect of the installation is the price of gas advertised: \$2.48 a gallon!

The project came about when the real-estate developer Michael Shvo closed on the gas station in early August. (He plans to eventually build a luxury condominium there.) To

beautify the space, and announce the purchase, one would guess, "I immediately wanted to transform it into a public art program," Mr. Shvo said the other day. At first he placed 60 trees around the site.

During a conversation with his friend, the gallerist Paul Kasmin, however, they decided it might be a good idea to turn the space into a sheep meadow and bring in 25 Lalanne sheep. Fifteen of the sheep already belonged to Mr. Shvo; the others came from other gardens and out of storage.

"It was a natural," said Mr. Kasmin. "The Lalanne sheep originally made the Parisian home into the French countryside," said Mr. Shvo. "So we brought the countryside into the New York gas station."

After they developed the idea, Mr. Kasmin flew to France to visit Mr. Lalanne's

widow, Claude. "At lunch in her garden I said, 'Please can you come to New York,'" Mr. Kasmin recalled. "She said, 'Tell me again exactly what you're doing,' and I said, 'My local petrol station has been bought by a friend of mine, and Michael and I are doing an installation there with the sheep.' And she said, 'Fine, I will come.'"

There was some discussion of whether to call the Getty station a petrol, gas or filling station, but Ms. Lalanne was pleased regardless.

"It was a surprise," she said, half in French and half in English, as the three sat around a bronze table of her design inside the dingy gas station. "It is a wonderful idea. I like very much the hills and the grass." Ms. Lalanne actually had a single French word for the project: "Formidable."

On Monday evening, Messrs.

Shvo and Kasmin planned to celebrate the opening of the Getty Station and welcome Ms. Lalanne to New York with a party featuring a barbecue cooked by chef Daniel Boulud. Art patrons like Nicolas Berggruen, Hilary Geary and Wilbur Ross, Bob Shaye and Mike Ovitz were expected.

"There will be burgers and hot dogs," said Mr. Shvo.

"But no lambchops," said Mr. Kasmin, which made Ms. Lalanne giggle.

"They are genius," Ms. Lalanne said.

Besides the sheep and the grass, which will need to be cut on a regular basis, the interiors and exteriors of the gas station will remain largely as is.

"From an art perspective, the gas station is a 1960s American icon," said Mr. Shvo, citing Robert Indiana and Ed Ruscha. The sheep will remain

through Oct. 20, and Mr. Shvo hopes to change the installation even through construction, which he plans to start early next year. Guards will watch over the gas station 24 hours a day, and members of Mr. Kasmin's gallery will be on hand inside the gas station's convenience store—which has been emptied of Gatorade and beef jerky—to answer questions. Children from the Avenues school, for instance, were already given a tour on Friday of last week.

"It's really a new way of marrying art and real estate,"

said Mr. Shvo. He didn't expect it would necessarily make people want to buy apartments in the location. "We're on the corner of 24th and 10th," he said. "There's plenty of want to be here, but it does create attention."

One problem the project has created, said Mr. Kasmin, is "we all used to get our cabs at the gas station when they stopped there to get gas. The only criticism in the neighborhood is, 'How am I going to get a cab now?'"

"Come on," said Mr. Shvo. "You can use Uber."

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

V MAGAZINE

December 2013



## W O R K I N P R O G R E S S

THESE ICONIC ARTISTS ARE LEGENDS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT, AND THEY RARELY SIT FOR PORTRAITS. BUT JASON SCHMIDT TRAVELED FROM NEW YORK TO BERLIN TO CAPTURE THEM AS THEY PUT THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON THEIR LATEST CREATIONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JASON SCHMIDT

## HERD MENTALITY

*Sheep Station* is a tribute to my late husband, François-Xavier Lalanne, who began making his iconic Mouton sculptures in the '60s. Set in a surrealist landscape amidst the industrial gas station structure, the sheep symbolize his mission to demystify art and capture its *joie de vivre*. This whimsical installation brings the French countryside to the center of Manhattan. Truly surreal. He would have been wonderfully delighted. **CLAUDE LALANNE**

FRANÇOIS-XAVIER LALANNE'S SHEEP STATION, PRESENTED BY PAUL KASMIN GALLERY AND MICHAEL SHVO, RAN FROM SEPTEMBER 17 TO OCTOBER 20 AT THE GETTY FILLING STATION LOCATED AT 10TH AVENUE AND WEST 24TH STREET IN NYC

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Town and Country  
May 2012

## WILD KINGDOM



In the surreal and sensual realm of Les Lalanne, cabbages sprout chicken feet, baboons become fireplaces, and benches appear to grow straight out of the earth. Here, their gallerist explores the husband-and-wife duo's most intimate domain: the farm studio where they brought forth more strange and wonderful creatures than Noah had on the ark.

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
**PAUL KASMIN**

### PAS DE DEUX

Right: François-Xavier and Claude Lalanne relaxing at their house in Ury, outside Paris, where they created art together for more than 40 years. Above: A bronze apple sculpture in a courtyard.



# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



STANT—THE HOUSE A VIBRANT WORKSHOP, THE GARDENS A LIVING MUSEUM.

**T**HE FIRST TIME I WENT TO visit François-Xavier and Claude Lalanne, it was for lunch. I remember leaving Paris and driving about an hour to Ury, a rather pretty, silent village with old stone farmhouses. After going through a pair of large wooden gates, I immediately entered the world of Les Lalanne. A combination of family, animals, and craftsmen filled the courtyard with activity. Right away, it was apparent that the entire property was alive with work. I became aware that this home was an industrious environment, as there were usually at least five or six people welding and doing all kinds of metalwork in the workshop and in the cobbled courtyard. In fact, the sculptures

in the house and gardens were never the same on any visit.

The feeling of being swallowed in the Lalannes' world is almost instant—the house a vibrant workshop, the gardens a living museum. The little farmhouse in the back of the garden seems to magically lead one from room to room, building to building, and garden to garden. As you walk through the property, you notice various sculptures casually living there. You then realize that you've gone through the neighboring house and have crossed the road into yet another building or barn. It has taken many years for me to be allowed to visit every room,



**THE DARK ARTS** The Indoor Tanning Association poured \$10,000 into the coffers of Speaker of the House John Boehner. Since the donations were not itemized, it is unknown whether the money was for legislative favor or part of a new rewards program for loyal customers.

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# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



**MONKEY BUSINESS**  
The studio where François-Xavier, who died in 2008, and Claude did much of their work.  
Right: Claude's work is loaded with details inspired by natural forms, including snail shells and hostas.



barn, and garden. I'm still not certain I have visited all of them.

Claude has always been a very keen gardener, and the gardens are an integral part of her work, from the Ginkgo, Choupatte, and Hortensia works to the wonderful jewelry pieces she creates. Even the garden gates were made by Claude. She is often found in her greenhouses or, in summer, wandering about her flower beds. The gardens are always beautiful, with rather old-fashioned wild plantings, poppies, and huge vines. There's a certain contained wildness to the vegetation, which is enlivened by the wonderful sculptures that inhabit it.

That first time I was invited, seven years ago, Claude and François-Xavier were absolutely charming, but I knew I was going to be inspected and questioned, in a very elegant way. I sensed we had all done a little homework on one another. The food was, as always, my favorite old-fashioned French cooking. The wines were equally old-fashioned, always claret. You can depend on having Rocamadour cheese and often the most delicious, slightly burned apple tart, Claude's *specialité*.

**T**HE LUNCHES ARE A FAMILY AFFAIR, AND I think we got along extremely well right away. Claude and François-Xavier's children and grandchildren are always present. The work seemed to make more sense and was more magical chez Lalanne, but from the moment the first sculptures arrived at my gallery in New York, in 2005,



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# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

## A JUNGLE IN THERE

*Below: Claude's bronze and copper Banquette Gingho with François-Xavier's Hippopotame II bar. Opposite, clockwise from top left: The foliage-inspired flatware Claude created in 1966; François-Xavier and Lulu; the wild profusion of the Lalannes' studio.*

there was incredible interest. Many of my favorite clients and friends seemed desperate to buy. From that moment on, I've gone back to the studio as often as I could, and it remains one of my favorite places in the world. Sometimes we do business; sometimes we don't. I feel as if I've become great friends with the entire Lalanne extended family.

**A**S A TEENAGER I WAS VERY FOND OF taking photographs, and I've continued on and off, albeit with some long breaks. Over the years, most of my photographs have been of artists in their studios. The Lalanne studio is the one I've visited most consistently and photographed more than any other.

I specifically remember photographing Claude and her famous Choupatte sculptures; they are the epitome of her work. The size of each sculpture is deter-

mined by the size of the cabbage that she grows: the bigger the cabbage, the longer and more involved the casting and founding process. The sculptures are finished when they're given their chicken feet.

François-Xavier always seemed to be working on something monkey-related. Each monkey portrait, from the tabletop to the fireplace, seemed to be an expression of his amusing and slightly surreal imaginary world. He died in 2008, and I still feel his character and presence in every sculpture I see.

Each and every Lalanne visit has been as inspiring as the first. I know of no other studio quite like it.

*Adapted from Claude & François-Xavier Lalanne: Art/Work/Life, by Paul Kasmin, published by Rizzoli International.*



EACH MONKEY PORTRAIT, FROM THE TABLETOP TO THE FIREPLACE, SEEMED TO BE AN EXPRESSION OF FRANCOIS-XAVIER'S AMUSING AND SLIGHTLY SURREAL IMAGINARY WORLD.

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# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



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# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Artnews  
April 2012

## Brass Menagerie



François-Xavier and Claude Lalanne at home in Ury, France, circa 2007.

The lighthearted sculptures of François-Xavier and Claude Lalanne—featuring animals such as rhinos, crocodiles, and sheep—bridge the worlds of fine and decorative arts

**BY STEPHANIE MURG**

“I would like to make a very big gorilla—very big—who eats dirty shirts,” François-Xavier Lalanne told a reporter in October 1966, on the eve of his show at Galerie Alexandre Iolas in Paris. A primate-cum-clothes-hamper would have been in good company in François-Xavier’s home. The modest apartment he inhabited at the time, with his wife and fellow artist, Claude, was already stuffed with useful beasts: a flock of 24 woolly sheep for plush seating, a 660-pound brass rhinoceros with storage compartments, and a bed in the shape of a huge white bird. Added their creator, “They are not furniture, they are not sculpture—just call them ‘Lalannes.’”

Easy description and classification still evade pieces by the Lalannes, who worked together—almost always in separate studios—from 1956 until François-Xavier’s death in December 2008, at the age of 81. They decided early on to exhibit their creations under the name “Les Lalanne” and never cared much for other labels. “Museums don’t know where to put us,” François-Xavier said in 1998.

Collectors have never had that problem, and interest in the Lalannes’ work continues to gain momentum internationally. Last December saw a new auction record, when a group of ten epoxy-stone sheep, designed around 1979, went for \$7.47 million at Christie’s Important 20th Century Decorative Art & Design sale in New York. And on May 4, also in New York, Paul Kasmin Gallery will debut a large exhibition on the Lalannes. “She’s working on all kinds of new things,” says

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



**Epoxy-and-bronze sheep by François-Xavier Lalanne, displayed along New York's Park Avenue in 2009.**

Kasmin, who has represented the artists since 2006, "and there is a fair amount of work that he made that hasn't been seen, so I'm very much concentrating on that." Works on view at the gallery will include several of Claude's "Choupattes," patinated bronze cabbages perched on chicken feet, with prices beginning at \$280,000.

Born in Agen, France, in 1927, François-Xavier attended art school at the Académie Julian in Paris and set up a studio in Montparnasse, where he befriended such neighbors as Constantin Brancusi, Jean Tinguely, and American sculptor James Metcalf. He met Paris-born Claude Dupeux, who studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, at a show of his paintings in 1952. The pair embarked on a series of design jobs—windows for Christian Dior (where they met a young Yves Saint Laurent, who would become one of their greatest patrons), set design for choreographer Maurice Béjart—before having their first "joint solo show," at Paris's Galerie J. in 1964. Among the pieces there were a brass rhino desk and Claude's first "Choupattes." Metcalf called it "a fine exhibition of contemporary objects useful to the extent you find them useful," and John Ashbery filed a favorable review for the *New York Herald Tribune*.

"We started with certain techniques that we developed with time and with which we evolved," says Claude, now in her late 80s. "The notion of utility is evident from the start. For us, it adds a dif-

ferent way of looking at a work of art." Their parallel but distinct practices—his deliberate and architectural, hers improvisational and organic—were introduced to American audiences in 1967, when the Art Institute of Chicago hosted a show that included a flock of sheep and *La Mouche*, a four-foot-long brass fly with Plexiglas wings that open to reveal a handcrafted toilet. In 1972, their foam bed in the form of a can of sardines was exhibited at Leo Castelli's "Furniture by Artists" show in New York, alongside Donald Judd's steel tables and Robert Rauschenberg's rubber-tire lamp. Critics were intrigued, but many viewers didn't know what to make of the Lalannes' meticulously crafted zoomorphic sculptures at a time when abstract art prevailed in the United States.

In the following decades, as the couple racked up retrospectives and commissions in France, their pieces gradually entered American collections through the championing of interior designers like Jacques Grange and Peter Marino and began to show up more frequently at sales of decorative arts and design in New York. Kasmin's exhibitions, including a 2009 display along Manhattan's Park Avenue, have stoked the American market for Les Lalanne, while dealer Ben Brown has reintroduced their works to London collectors. His 2007 exhibition of bronze creatures and leafy furniture was the first Lalanne show in England since 1976.

At the farm in Ury, France, where the couple moved in 1967, Claude continues to create tables draped in bronze crocodile skins, called "Crococonsoles," and vermeil necklaces made from electroplated lettuce leaves. Kasmin remembers his first visit to the Lalannes' sprawling, wisteria-swaddled

**Mouflon de Pauline (grand, bar), 1993, a bronze bar cabinet by François-Xavier Lalanne.**



# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



world (about an hour's drive from Paris) as an immersive experience. "I became aware that this home was an industrious environment, as there would be at least five or six people welding and doing all kinds of metalwork in the workshop and the cobble courtyard," he writes in his introduction to *Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne: Art. Work.*

**François-Xavier Lalanne's *Singe Avise (très grand)*, 2008 (above).**  
**Claude Lalanne's *Pomme de Jardin*, 2007 (below).**



*Life.*, a book of photographs coming out in May from Skira Rizzoli. "The sculptures in the house and gardens were never the same on any visit."

As for the recent auction record at Christie's, Kasmin describes his reaction as "surprised but not that surprised," explaining, "With Lalanne, once people decide that they want something, they're determined to get it. There have been a few occasions where results have gone completely crazy, and it's people that just want the work."

"We've seen very strong prices for Lalanne going back to 2005 and 2006 at auction, and it is the blue-chip thing of the market these days," says James Zemaitis, director of Sotheby's 20th-century design department. Lalanne pieces, in fact, emerged at the top of the December design sales at both Christie's and Sotheby's.

At the peak of the latter's auction was the Lalannes' sleek bronze *Centaure*, which sold for \$542,500, nearly double its high estimate. The seven-foot-tall half-man, half-horse, executed in 1983, was a rare collaboration between husband and wife. "Our architect friend Paul Chemetov was in charge of building the French embassy in New Delhi. He wanted us to make a sculpture for the embassy as long as we built it together," Claude says of the statue's genesis. "François made the animal, and I made the man." ■

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# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Art + Auction  
April 2012

APRIL 2012

## MARKETFILE

THE BUSINESS OF ART



A group of 10 *Mouton de pierre*, designed ca. 1979 by François-Xavier Lalanne, reached an artist high of \$7,474,500 at Christie's last December.

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François-Xavier and Claude Lalanne

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## François-Xavier & Claude Lalanne

BY MEREDITH MENDELSON

SINCE THE EARLY 1960s, when Claude Dupeux and the late François-Xavier Lalanne began making art alongside each other, the couple's complementary output has epitomized a luxurious French eccentricity. Celebrated for translating flora and fauna into quirky yet elegant sculpture and furniture, they have been championed by chic tastemakers from Yves Saint Laurent and Jacques Grange to Peter Marino and Reed Krakoff. Yet for decades, works by "les Lalanne" were the exclusive domain of the adventurous and privileged. "From the 1960s through the '90s they were found in only the most interesting and beautiful private houses and avant-garde collections—the Rothschilds, the de Menils," says their Paris dealer, Jean-Gabriel Mitterrand, who has been showing their work since the 1970s. In recent years, he says, "their reputation has grown

significantly and their status has changed." Fabien Naudan, associate director of Artcurial Paris, which has offered works by the Lalannes for decades, says, "They may have been more exclusive and avant-garde in the '80s, but the name is now known and people want to own something by them."

Mitterrand has seen prices jump to roughly three to five times where they were in 2000 for the most coveted works: François-Xavier's signature sheep, hippos, rhinos, and gorillas, and Claude's bronze ginkgo-leaf tables and crocodile stools, which now routinely go for six figures. In February 2009, a few months after François-Xavier's death, the Christie's Paris sale of the collection of Saint Laurent and his partner, Pierre Bergé, "kicked off the big, big prices," according to Mitterrand.

**François-Xavier Lalanne favored animal motifs with a slightly Surrealist bent; his bronze *Taureau II*, 1992, opens to reveal a desk and storage space and was shown at the 2010 ArtHK fair by Ben Brown Fine Arts.**

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# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

## ARTIST DOSSIER



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From top: Pieces by Claude Lalanne are distinguished by their graceful lines and rich textures; her gilt-bronze *Trône de Pauline* chair, 2000, earned a quadruple-estimate \$119,500 at Heritage Auction, Dallas, in December 2010. Her iconic *Choupatte* comes in various sizes priced between \$80,000 and \$600,000 at Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York.

The sale included 10 Lalanne lots, all of which far exceeded their estimates. The €6,106,000 (\$7.8 million) total for their work included €2,753,000 (\$3.5 million) for a 1965 bar estimated at €200,000 to €300,000 (\$256–384,000) by François-Xavier, and an artist-record €1,857,000 (\$2.4 million) for a group of 15 mirrors adorned with scrolling bronze foliage, made by Claude between 1974 and 1985 (est. €700,000–1 million; \$895,000–1.3 million). Later that year, 45 works from a major private European collection came up for sale via Christie's Paris; the top performer was a unique, monumental owl sculpture in marble by François-Xavier, *La dame blanche*, 2005, which earned €409,000 (\$570,000).

This past December, the Lalanne market reached new heights when a set of 10 stone sheep fetched a record \$7,474,500 against an estimate of \$600,000 to \$900,000 at a 20th-century

design auction at Christie's New York. Although the payout was somewhat anomalous—department head Carina Villingier described the sale as “one of those magical auction moments where two parties really wanted the same thing”—the result nevertheless represented a sharp escalation in price; prior to 2009, an individual sheep had never passed the \$150,000 mark.

Claude (born 1924) and François-Xavier (born 1927) met in Paris in 1952 at the latter's first gallery show, of Cubist-style paintings. Both had studied locally; she, architecture at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs, and he, drawing, painting, and sculpture at the Académie Julian. They both moved in artistic circles that included Constantin Brancusi (François-Xavier's neighbor), Max Ernst, Man Ray, and Salvador Dalí. François-Xavier shifted his focus to three-dimensional works in the early 1950s, while Claude, who had grown up watching her father, a gold broker, attempt to transform base metals into precious ones, had long been fascinated by such metal-morphing techniques as electroplating. François-Xavier joined Claude as a window designer for Christian Dior in the mid 1950s, signaling the start of their lifelong working relationship. Their first gallery exhibition together, in 1964 at Paris's Galerie J, included his *Rhinochrétaire* fold-out desk and her *Choupatte* cabbage with bird feet—lighthearted takes on the headier endeavors of the Surrealists. The couple married in 1967 and only exhibited together thereafter.

From the early 1960s, the imprimatur of Saint Laurent and Bergé lent the Lalannes a certain cachet but also pinned them at the hazy crossroads of art and design, which over the years may have alienated collectors. Yet, as their New York dealer, Paul Kasmin, observes, “François-Xavier never thought of himself as anything other than an artist.” Craftsmanship was paramount: The two artists sculpted in rich-looking materials, such as bronze and brass, made all their own molds, and only occasionally used fabricators, producing the bulk of their output at their extensive workshop in Ury, near Fontainebleau. Early supporters, such as the legendary dealer Alexandre Iolas (anything that passed through him is golden at auction), did not distinguish between art and design, yet the Lalannes' works were never quite understood by the broader public, and although they were shown by various dealers in New York and Los Angeles, an American market failed to take root.

“For a long time they were treated as eccentric sculptors, placed in the back of fine-art sale catalogues,” says James Zemaits, director of Sotheby's 20th-century design department in New York. “Around 2005 we saw a concerted effort by a new group of galleries to really do something with them.” Villingier, of Christie's, notes that today's Lalanne aficionado

is as likely to be a design collector as one of traditional or contemporary art: “The market is so hot at the moment and there are so many possible buyers across a wide variety of fields,” she says.

Kasmin first visited the Ury studio in 2005. “I was bowled over,” he says. “It was chockablock with great work. I could see immediately that it was a good idea to show them.” His first exhibition with the Lalannes, in late 2006, brought them into the purview of New York's contemporary art world, and after a year, says Kasmin, “the escalation of prices never stopped.” He speculates that the newfound appreciation had something to do with the contrast the Lalannes provided against other contemporary



ART+AUCTION APRIL 2012 | ARTINFO.COM

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

## ARTIST DOSSIER

Claude's bronze *Pomme rouge*, 2010, was produced in an edition of eight and is available for €211,000 (\$277,000) from her longtime Paris dealer, Jean-Gabriel Mitterrand.

art being produced in the mid 2000s. "Here was something beautifully made—and in bronze," he says. "People appreciated that." In May Kasmin will mount a show that includes one large, unique piece, *Hippopotame I*, 1968–69, a blue resin hippo that opens up to reveal a washbasin, and several more recent works, including Claude's *Nouveau lapin de victoire (grand)*, 2010, an oversized bronze rabbit from an edition of eight, priced around \$400,000 to \$600,000.

Over the years the Lalannes worked on numerous commissions for private clients, but these objects are extremely hard to come by. "I've sold one in 10 years," says Mitterrand. Likewise, unique pieces from the 1960s and '70s are very hard to find—their owners tend to be "passionate collectors who have no desire to ever sell them," says London and Hong Kong dealer Ben Brown, who has worked with the Lalannes since 2005. More readily available are multiples, usually produced in runs of eight. Buyers don't seem to mind when an edition was made, "as long as it has the signature," says Zemaitis.

Today François-Xavier's functional editions, such as the bronze hippopotamus that opens to reveal a bar, bring in the mid six figures. Mitterrand knows of a large bronze rhinoceros desk that recently sold privately for \$1.3 million. The only François-Xavier pieces that bring less than \$100,000 these days are smaller works made in larger editions, such as the two Pigeon lamps produced in a licensed edition by Artcurial in the early 1990s that sold in November for €31,500 and €32,800 (\$42,300 and \$44,500).

For Claude, who has usually worked on a smaller scale, mirrors and furniture are the most sought after, and even her coveted botanic-inspired jewelry and utensils can be had for less than \$100,000. Artcurial's Naudan notes that carpets and lamps are more affordable and available, running in the lower five figures. The house's May 15 design sale in Paris includes a *Petit troupeau* wool rug by François-Xavier, estimated at €15,000 to €20,000 (\$20–26,000), and a bronze candelabrum by Claude, estimated at €30,000 to €50,000 (\$40–66,000).

The husband and wife collaborated rarely. A piece they made together, *Pomme de Ben*, 2007, consists of one of François-Xavier's monkeys perched on the stem of one of Claude's trademark apples and "is completely sold out. I get requests for it on a monthly basis," says Brown. Another of their rare cosigned works, *Centaure*, 1983 (est. \$200–300,000), earned \$542,500 at Sotheby's New York last December.

The Lalannes are also among the few 20th-century designers whose art has found a receptive audience in Asia. A show of their work at Brown's Hong Kong gallery last fall was highly successful, with examples of Claude's ginkgo-leaf furniture and François-Xavier's *Gorille consolé*, 2002, going



to international buyers. "People of all backgrounds adore their work, whether they collect Surrealism, super-contemporary art, decorative art, or even Old Masters," says Brown. "Anybody who has been to a solo exhibition of les Lalanne will know that you enter a very specific whimsical and humorous world." For Marino, their appeal is even more elusive, and yet ultimately irresistible, summed up simply as "the truth expressed in all the work." ■

### From the Files

A major retrospective designed by Peter Marino, at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris in 2010, showcased more than 150 of the Lalannes' works.

Dealer Paul Kasmin's photographs of the Lalannes' longtime home and workshop in Ury will be published in the monograph *François-Xavier and Claude Lalanne: Art, Work, Life*, out in May from Rizzoli.

Claude produced copper bodices for Yves Saint Laurent's fashion line in 1969.

François-Xavier's 10-inch-tall patinated and gilt-copper rhinoceros condiment holder—a unique piece from 1978—brought in €193,000 (\$238,000), nearly five times its €40,000 (\$50,000) high estimate, at Christie's Paris in May 2010.

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE ECONOMIST  
April 8, 2010

## Animal, vegetable, mineral

Go to Paris for one of this spring's most enjoyable exhibitions



A SCULPTED grasshopper that measures six feet (1.85 metres) in length stands at the entrance to the private apartments at Windsor Castle. Made of brass, steel and Sèvres porcelain, it was a gift to Queen Elizabeth from President Georges Pompidou after her state visit to France in 1972. It was an arresting, witty and practical offering: lift up the creature's back and the interior serves as a wine cooler. The grasshopper was made in Paris by François-Xavier Lalanne, who, since the 1960s, had exhibited with his wife, Claude, as the Lalannes.

Unlike Claes Oldenburg and his wife, Coosje van Bruggen, the Lalannes did not collaborate so much as co-create. These independent artisan-artists made their pieces out of metal, but he hammered and riveted while she moulded. In their choice of subject matter they were polar opposites. He favoured animals; she vegetation. Nevertheless, as a 150-piece retrospective in Paris demonstrates, seen together their works produce an echoing harmony. At once punchy and dreamlike, this is a hugely attractive show.

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

## THE ECONOMIST

April 8, 2010

Visitors are greeted by a bronze rabbit, 11 feet long with ears blown back as if by the wind. Its feet, however, are hooves and its tail is that of a bird. The large bronze cat also combines elements of several creatures. When young, Mr Lalanne worked as a guard at the Louvre, where he studied its Egyptian collection. The influence of Hindu deities is also clear. Among his other works on view are a rocking-chair bird, a series of life-sized rhinos and a gorilla whose chest opens to reveal a safe. Many of Mrs Lalanne's pieces are fashioned from sinuous vines and leaves twisted into candelabra, garden benches, jewellery and gates. Their debt to Surrealism and Art Nouveau is obvious. So is their droll, devil-may-care inventiveness.

Mr Lalanne died in December 2008. His widow chose Peter Marino, an architect-decorator and longtime friend and Lalanne collector, to design this exhibition. The result is a mixture of intimate and public spaces; cosy rooms and sweeping, contemporary-gallery-style vistas. Some walls are covered in ivy. Part of the vast central court is a turquoise reflecting pool which has no water, but is filled with frogs and graceful waterfowl. It is backed by sand dunes on which two shaggy camels rest. Elsewhere in the court a flock of life-sized sheep straggle across a field of AstroTurf. It was sheep on rollers that launched the Lalannes' career. In 1966 Mr Lalanne sent a herd of 24 woolly ones to the Salon de la Jeune Peinture. Each could be sat on; together they became banquettes or beds. They were hailed as three-dimensional Magittes. The Lalannes were on the art map.

Alexander Iolas, champion of the Surrealists, became their dealer and introduced the Lalannes to America. A year after the Salon, the Art Institute of Chicago gave them a show, and *Life* magazine a four-page spread. "Baby" Jane Holzer, known as one of Andy Warhol's "superstars", asked Mr Lalanne to make one of his rhinos in leather. That beast, which breaks into a set of comfy-looking chairs, was shown

in the early 1970s at the influential Castelli gallery in New York. It is one of the works on loan to the Paris show.

By the 1980s Mr Iolas's gallery had closed; minimalism and conceptualism were in vogue in America. It was not until 2007 that a dealer named Paul Kasmin began to represent them in New York. Their work was snapped up by a new generation of young collectors. Two years later, he organised a display of Lalanne sculptures along the traffic islands on Park Avenue, including Mrs Lalanne's bronze of a big, big apple.

The artists' greatest admirers have been in France. A room in the retrospective spotlights Yves Saint Laurent's acquisitions. Among them are a modernist bar by Mr Lalanne and a group of mirrors by his widow. At Christie's Yves Saint Laurent/Pierre Bergé sale last year the Lalanne bar sold for more than \$3.5m, over ten times the top estimate, and the ensemble of 15 mirrors for nearly \$2.5m, twice the estimate. The whopping prices and global coverage of the sale introduced the Lalannes to a new audience. Ben Brown, their London dealer, reports that his biggest problem now is not finding buyers, but works to sell.

The Lalannes have always occupied the borderland between high and decorative art. Some critics feel they did not break new ground; others the opposite, that they drew serious attention to this terrain. Rob Wynne, a New York artist who is represented by the same Paris dealer, will surely not be the only one to see the influence of the Lalannes on artists, such as Barry Flanagan, a Welsh sculptor known for his giant bronze hares, or the famous fish lamps made by Frank Gehry. In the Lalannes' world the down-to-earth and the funny merge with the fantastical and baroque.

"Les Lalannes" is at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris until July 4th. "Lalannes" opens at the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Gardens, Coral Gables, Florida in December 2010.

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE NEW YORK TIMES  
March 29, 2010

## An Art Menagerie Touched With Magic



Alexandre Bailhache

The Lalannes' animals all keep a quirky little secret, and their backs and bellies reveal unlikely functions.

By SUZY MENKES

Published: March 29, 2010

PARIS — The rabbit sits firm in front of a leafy wall, ears outlined against a vista of a distant chateau. Its big, bold bronze head quivers and shifts, as if touched by magic.

“Lalanne in Wonderland” would be a good title for the compelling menagerie of rhinos and rabbits, monkeys and the designer’s signature curly sheep.

All the animals keep a quirky little secret, which makes them as much artifacts as art objects. Backs and bellies reveal unlikely functions, as a secret drawer opens from the chest of a minotaur or seating is glimpsed under the hairy coats of a herd of camels, placed by a tranquil pool of water.

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE NEW YORK TIMES

March 29, 2010

François-Xavier Lalanne, who died in 2008, and his wife Claude are the husband-and-wife artists whose whimsical, but very different, works captivated a generation from the 1960s on.

The couple's foremost friend and collaborator was Yves Saint Laurent, whose infamous molded metal bustier of 1969 for the model Veruschka pre-dated Madonna's conical bosoms by more than two decades. The breast plates are no longer attached to the flowing chiffon dresses that created shock and scandal on the runway. Instead they are presented as sculpted artworks in a re-creation of the late Saint Laurent's study. There is a modernist metal and crystal bar from 1965, and a series of mirrors framed with galvanized copper branches. There are also chairs made of wrought metal leaves, as though some goblin had plucked the furniture from nature.

"Les Lalanne" at Les Arts Décoratifs in Paris lives up to the museum's name. This is the essence of decorative art, whether it is Claude Lalanne's jewelry, spun in metal out of nature's plants and thorny branches, or her husband's monumental pieces: A lineup of different rhinoceroses and a cranium of wires outlined against windows that look out onto the gardens of the Louvre.

A cornucopia of Mr. Lalanne's creations from the early 1970s encompasses a bed filled with leather cushions like sardines in a tin, a hippopotamus whose insides contain mini washrooms, and even a baboon with fire literally in its belly, because the body is a chimney above a carved-out fireplace.

"There are no pieces that don't hide something," says Béatrice Salmon, the museum's director. Her aim was to show the playful waltz between the two artists, both of whom made pieces that touch on the traditions of antiquity, artisanal handwork and the decorative arts.

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE NEW YORK TIMES  
March 29, 2010

Even displayed in an empty room, the collection — much of it on loan from private clients in Paris and New York — would be fascinating. But in its current context, created by the American architect Peter Marino, the effect is both playful and stunning.

A leafy private “garden” is the background for the line of sheep — Mr. Lalanne’s most famous creation — as surreal seats. They, along with a Claude Lalanne’s copper and bronze cabbage with bird feet, have pride of place in the grand hall.

In one of six interiors, Mr. Marino has re-created the Alice-in-Wonderland dining table he made for a New York dinner in honor of the Lalanne. Wildly wrought flora-and-fauna cutlery compete for attention with a lineup of mini sculpted elephants with fountains of water flowing from their trunks.

Defining the differing styles of the two, Mr. Marino says that “his art was derived from animal gestures while she has great powers of observation.”

The essence of the exhibition is in the pieces which mix animal and human qualities, such as a table where a crouching monkey supports the top — one of the rare objects that the duo worked on together. Another striking piece is a copper sofa with crocodiles stretching out their scaly skins underneath.

A fascinating film from the 1960s reveals the surreal world of the Lalanne home-cum-studio, and explains why Salvador Dalí himself would be a client. The moustachioed artist might have led the strange parade of visitors and friends who created a human chain astride the sheep.

For Mr. Marino, this museum show was a labor of love.

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

THE NEW YORK TIMES  
March 29, 2010

"It's easier to open five Vuitton boutiques than to do the work for a 100-day exhibition," said the architect, referring to his day job for luxury brands. The show opens with a circular silver seat decorated with leaves and made for the house of Christian Dior.

Mr. Marino is working other displays: one this week in Dresden to mark the 300th anniversary of Meissen porcelain; another in April at London's Wallace Collection of his own collection of 16th- and 17th-century bronzes.

Ms. Salmon says that this is the perfect moment to display the sweep of the Lalanne's creativity, because the world increasingly venerates nature and appreciates its raw beauty.

"The number of young designers who are interested in animals shows that the subject resonates with lots of contemporary artists," she said.

But the show is no didactic lesson. There is an intrinsically French lightness to the decoration, which is more rococo than baroque — and more playful than either of those art forms.

No wonder that adults and children alike seem captivated by this ebullient ode to nature carved out of bronze and done with exceptional artistic imagination and flair.

Les Lalanne. Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris. *Through July 4.*



# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

September 2007

# WORLDLYGOODS

A SOURCEBOOK TO THE UNIQUE

Property Tax Strategy, Red-Carpet Chopard

The Lalannes at their home and studios near Fontainebleau, France, where they've been based since the late sixties



## Origin of Their Species

Precursors to today's edgy art-design crossovers, Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne have always been a breed apart. **BY NICHOLAS CALLAWAY**

**A**lthough Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne are two of the art world's most original designer-sculptors, until quite recently they were among its best-kept secrets. The French husband and wife have worked side by side for more than half a century, often collaborating, making art that is harmonious and complementary without losing their individuality. He is best known for his animal sculptures and furniture, especially his famous sheep chairs; she for nature-inspired furniture, such as gingko-leaf tables and benches

and chandeliers cast from tree branches. Together the couple is known simply as Les Lalanne.

Claude and FX, (as he is often called) have always charted their own course, oblivious to the crosscurrents of passing trends. They were decorative artists when the term was derogatory, they worked figuratively in an age of abstraction, and they kept the Surrealist spirit alive when it was perfectly passé. In many ways they are the godparents of the current generation of very different artist-designers—people like Marc Newson and Ron Arad, who blur the line between furniture and sculpture.

CONTINUED »



# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

September 2007

Now that the worlds of contemporary art and design have caught on to the Lalannes, collectors are clamoring for their work. The couple's recent shows at the Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York and Ben Brown Fine Arts in London were huge successes. Coach president Reed Krakoff is a big fan, as is Yves Saint Laurent cofounder and auction house owner Pierre Bergé. (Coach sponsored a book on the Lalannes, published last year to accompany the shows.) Tom Ford had Claude make a desk for his recently opened flagship in New York. And architect Peter Marino, who has been collecting their work for 30 years, keeps them backlogged with projects such as the bronze stag he commissioned from EX. for Chanel's new store in Beverly Hills.

"The Lalannes' work has everything I look for in sculpture—the original expression of individual perceptions," Marino says. "Their foundation in nature is underscored by a surrealistic sense of humor and a timelessness."

In the fifties the Lalannes' Montparnasse studio was next to Constantin Brancusi's, and he became a friend and artistic mentor. From the master they learned invaluable lessons—about distilling form down to its essence, respecting materials, and the importance of painstakingly hand-polishing stone and bronze. Most of all they absorbed his religious dedication to the daily practice of making art, viewing it as something that's as necessary to life as breathing and eating.

Claude and EX., both in their early eighties, have lived near Fontainebleau, France, since 1967, in a converted farmhouse among a warren of old stone stables, barns, and courtyards. Walled rose gardens are filled with a menagerie of their sheep, owls, frogs, giant carp, monkeys, deer, and bears—all cast and welded in bronze and copper. They work in adjacent stone ateliers with large glass walls, joined by a small team of longtime assistants, welders, and fabricators. "We each have our own work so our studios are separate, but our exhibitions are joint," Claude says.

In the studio she plays Lennon to her husband's McCartney. A tender Dadaist with an acid wit, Claude designs using



Baboon, François-Xavier's 1984 cast-iron stove



September 2007

François-Xavier works on the stag for Chanel's new Beverly Hills store.

**Brancusi** taught the couple lessons about distilling form down to its essence and respecting materials.



A 1990 version of Claude's Apple-Mouth

visual puns and dreamlike juxtapositions. Her *Caroline enceinte* (Caroline Pregnant), from 1969–78, is a life-size bronze nude cast from a female model, topped by a head of cabbage. *Pomme-Bouche* (Apple-Mouth), a bronze fruit with smiling lips from 1975, is both unsettling and playfully disarming. And her 1994 pair of *Crocosoles* look like scaly crocodile skins draped over a base of swirling tendrils.

EX.'s sensibility, meanwhile, is more idyllic and romantic. As an artist he has probably shepherded more creatures than anyone since Noah. Many are polymorphous and function as furniture, though they are far from practical. His creations include a rhino desk, a bull bureau, topiary boars, a baboon stove, a crane lamp, dove chairs, and an elephant fountain. Other pieces are exquisite sculptures, ranging in scale from miniature to monumental: stags, gorillas, rabbits, and, of course, sheep, which have been his leitmotif since the sixties. I defy anyone to behold his flock (he's done versions in wool, in bronze, and in cementlike epoxy stone) without cracking a smile.

"The animal world constitutes the richest and most varied source of forms on the planet," EX. says, by way of explaining his obsession. "Furthermore, it provides a gigantic vocabulary of signs and metaphors. And do not forget that animals are man's oldest companions."

These octogenarian enfants terribles have never lost their sly wit nor their *joie de la création*. Their work is fresh and yet so timeless that it looks equally at home in a rustic farmhouse, a hip boutique, or a museum gallery. And while the couple is suddenly fashionable after half a century, it hasn't changed how they work. The Lalannes found their artistic path early on and they've stuck to it ever since. ■

Select works by Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne are available through the Paul Kasmin Gallery (293 Tenth Ave., New York; 212-563-4474; paulkasmingallery.com), Ben Brown Fine Arts (21 Cork St., London; 44-207-734-8888; hebrownfinearts.com), and JGM Galerie (79 Rue du Temple, Paris; 33-1-43-26-12-05; jgmalerie.com).

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



August 11, 2007

## FT REPORT - HOUSE AND HOME: Where furniture and sculpture meet

By Brook Mason, Financial Times  
Published: Aug 11, 2007

Two-and-a-half millennia ago, wealthy Romans favoured cast bronze beds, often embedded with copper and silver, for the sleeping quarters of their palatial frescoed villas. The Greeks had bronze tripods on feline feet for lamps and incense burners along with beds and footstools, and, even earlier, from the 13th century BC, the most lavish Cypriot homes were decorated with functional metal pieces.

"Those bronze furnishings were the luxury goods of the ancient world," says Beryl Barr-Sharrar, a professor of art history at New York University.

As empires fell and, later, monarchies folded, expensive and heavy cast metal furniture was increasingly replaced by less costly carved wooden items. But the lure of intricate, sometimes over-the-top, hand-wrought pieces in bronze and similar materials has never completely faded.

In early 20th century Paris designer Armand-Albert Rateau was well known for his stylish bronze seating, including a set of *fauteuils aux poissons* - armchairs with a fish scale pattern on the back and scallop shells on the frame - made in 1919 for New York financier George Blumenthal's pool. Italian-Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti and his brother Diego followed with pared down, surrealist metal furniture - coffee tables, consoles and music stands; a bronze bird here, a flower there.

A few decades later, streamlined, mass-produced stainless steel designs from the likes of architects Mies van der Rohe and Marcel Breuer symbolised the dominant aesthetic. But by the 1960s, in some high society circles, cast bronze and other hand-turned metal pieces were again in vogue. The limited edition work of French couple Claude and Francois-Xavier Lalanne in particular became a cult fascination with buyers including fashion designer Yves St Laurent and his chief executive Pierre Bergé.

Today, art galleries around the world are championing these older designers as well as a new generation of players in the metal furniture world, selling their one-off pieces for increasingly impressive prices.

One of Rateau's chairs sold for more than €1.5m at a Christie's auction in Paris last year, more than double its estimate and far outstripping prices in the 1970s, when a set of four chairs by the designer sold for a mere \$3,500. And work by the Lalannes, though not as rare or expensive, is equally popular with homeowners around the world.

"Collectors for Lalanne span the [US] even down to Atlanta and suburban Maryland," says Paul Kasmin of the eponymous New York gallery. Earlier this year he put on the first big exhibition of their work in 30 years and all 60 pieces, including six Croconsoles at \$100,000 each and three fireplaces in the shape of baboons priced at \$300,000, sold. Ben Brown Fine Arts in London also held a successful Lalanne show this summer, drawing buyers from Switzerland, Germany, France, Greece and Hong Kong. "Each time it was couples and many of them already had work or knew someone who [did] and liked it," Brown says. "Sales were evenly distributed between 'useless' sculpture and 'useful' furniture."

Reed Krakoff, chief executive of Coach and an avid collector of Lalanne, explains the appeal. "With more collectors upping their art holdings, they are turning to furniture by artists," he says. "The Lalannes' work straddles both fine art and design. That's what captivates me."

He has examples of the couple's bronze furnishings in both his Manhattan and Long Island homes, including a pair of Claude Lalanne's Pomme-bouches, bronze apples sporting casts of his own lips and his wife's. (Another Lalanne commission - a bronze desk cast from a crocodile perched on branch-like legs with a matching chair - can be found in the centre of Tom Ford's new store in New York.)

One of the the best-known contemporary designers of hand-finished metal furniture is Israeli-born, London-based Ron Arad, who works in heavy duty iron and polished stainless steel as well as more precious metals,

such as bronze, and complex mixtures of alloys. New York's Friedman Benda gallery will showcase his pieces in its new Chelsea space in September, offering one chair composed of stainless steel rods priced at \$500,000.

"Ron is a very testosterone-driven artist and making his work is pure art and hard labour," says Marc Benda. Buyers of his most expensive metal furniture range from hedge fund managers to "real estate types with lots of space like downtown lofts", he adds. "They are drawn to [it] because it challenges them." In fact, Krakoff displays Arad pieces alongside his Lalanne.

Australian designer Marc Newson has also had much success with metal. Aside from his famed aluminium Lockheed Lounge, a rare model of which is now priced at \$2m through Latin American paintings dealer Rames Barquet, his 1986 Pod chest of drawers, also in aluminium, sold for more than \$1m to gallerist Larry Gagosian at Christie's contemporary art sale in New York in May, making it the most expensive piece of furniture by a living artist ever sold. Other functional works in nickel, as well as marble, go for six-figure sums at Gagosian's New York gallery.

Given the skyrocketing prices for metal works from established designers, gallerists and collectors have begun to search out emerging ones. Five years ago Barry Friedman introduced his clients to the limited edition bronze furnishings of Ingrid Donat, a French artist mentored by Diego Giacometti who has studied furniture construction, casting, engraving and patinating. Sales of her work, which makes use of Mayan scroll-work, Egyptian hieroglyphs and Greco-Roman caryatids, have more than tripled since, attracting finance and design industry buyers from New York to Munich. "What's new are calls for Donat's work from designers in Chicago, Seattle and Denver," says Carole Hochman, Friedman's gallery director. Prices start at \$10,000 and rise to \$100,000 for a big sideboard.

Architect Robert Couturier has used Donat in client homes from Caracas to the Hamptons and recently filled an entire ski chalet in Aspen, Colorado, with nothing but her furnishings, even down to the lamps. "Her work is in the tradition of Giacometti and some clients have his work in New York but don't want to repeat it elsewhere, so Donat is very fitting," he explains. The comedian and actor Steve Martin is also reportedly a fan.

Philippe Anthonioz is another French sculptor-turned-furniture designer, now being championed by Lefevre Fine Art in London, which previously dealt exclusively in impressionist and modern art, and Galerie Tino Zervudachi in Paris. Blurring the line between sculpture and furniture, his limited edition, cast bronze pieces have been snapped up by designers David Mlinaric, John Stefanidis and Peter Marino. "I felt he was credible enough to be shown in a fine art environment," says Alexander Corcoran of Lefevre. After all, as Anthonioz explains, "I make no difference between my sculpture and my furniture."

Offering a similar ethos but putting a slightly different spin on this burgeoning bespoke market is London-based Ian Abell, whose company Based Upon employs a patented technology to turn metal into liquid, which can then be sprayed on to any surface. Working with a team of metallurgists, sculptors and ceramicists and a glassblower, he turns out furnishings in complex alloys as well as lacquer and coloured resins. A commode can cost £25,000. "Everything is made by hand and there is a connection to natural forms", bearing the imprint of shagreen or the veining of leaves, Abell says. "Private commissions have quadrupled in the last 18 months."

Clients include fashion designer Donna Karan, as well as music and property executives. One recent custom project included 30 pieces for the owner of a house on the volcanic island of Pantelleria, off Sicily.

An Oxford University graduate who studied philosophy, Abell has thought carefully about the messages conveyed by different metals in different finishes and the appeal of hand-crafted, sculptural work, from Rateau's to the Lalannes', Arad's to his own. "I think people are looking for furniture beyond the rush of the contemporary art market and removed from a certain slickness," he says.

Krakoff agrees. "People today [want] furniture that borders on sculpture and speaks of the creative process. With life so transient, the furniture is enduring."

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Financial Times  
Sep. 5th and 6th, 2009

## Street cred

*The work of the Lalannes, design-art duo extraordinary, moves outdoors. By Brook Mason*

**T**he artful sculptural oeuvre of Claude and her late husband François-Xavier Lalanne is about to go on display on Park Avenue, Manhattan. From September 13, eight of the French couple's monumental sculptures, including a riotous copper and bronze cabbage sporting chicken feet and a flock of 12 bronze sheep, will make up the first large outdoor Lalanne exhibition in the US. The works, which date from 1994 to 2008, feature in a show organised by the New York City Parks Public Art Program in conjunction with the Lalannes' dealer Paul Kasmin Gallery.

"I've wanted to show their sculpture outdoors for years because for too long it has been like a little secret, with only private collectors owning that work," says Kasmin, speaking from his Chelsea gallery.

At the same time, British admirers will be able to see open-air Lalannes in Sotheby's selling exhibition *Beyond Limits*, which opens on September 14 in the grounds of Chatsworth House in Derbyshire, northern England.

Prices are expected to be high. On Park Avenue the 2008 work "Choupatte (Très Grand)", the cabbage on chicken's legs, measuring more than four feet across, is on the market at \$450,000. Perhaps the prices reflect the sense that there will not be many more such works: François-Xavier died in December last year and his wife is 85, though still working at the couple's home and studio in Ury, a village not far from Paris.

To create their work – which they signed either Les Lalanne or simply Lalanne – the couple cast forms from life employing electroplating techniques. François-Xavier focused on large-scale sculpture, such as his 1964 "Rhinocrétaire", a life-size rhino with a desk in its belly, while Claude generated more fanciful pieces such as exquisite jewellery and Sèvres tea services encrusted with twine.



Les Lalanne's  
'Pomme de New York'  
(2007) in  
Manhattan

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The Lalannes' work has been growing in popularity for the past few years, although they had been working together for 50 years. At London's Ben Brown Fine Arts, sales shot up 300 per cent between 2005 and 2008. "Clients are from all over the world, with the biggest growth in Asia," says Brown. A high point came in February this year, at Christie's Paris sale of the contents of Yves Saint Laurent's apartment, when a bar with a horn-shaped cocktail shaker by François-Xavier zoomed past its €200,000-€300,000 estimate and sold for a staggering €2,753,000.

It was in 1964 that Yves Saint Laurent and his partner Pierre Bergé commissioned François-Xavier to create the bar in 1964. Gradually they added to their holdings – mirrors cast from lily pads and tendrils by Claude, marble chairs in the shape of doves by François-Xavier. Paris interior designers such as Jacques Grange, who worked on the YSL/Bergé homes, ordered up Lalanne for other commissions as well.

With a range that covers huge installations in anthropomorphic forms, giant topiary shapes of dinosaurs, chairs, desks, jew-

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Claude's bronze  
'Olympe (grande)'  
2009



ellery and delicate domestic candlesticks, the Lalannes' work defies categorisation. Although some people saw the work as surrealist, the serious art world viewed the couple as more artisan than artist.

Even in the world of design, Americans took some persuading. In the 1970s François-Xavier created a bed akin to a can of sardines with fish as pillows, and a rhino that could be broken down into various chairs, for Jane Holzer at Daedalus, her artists' furniture company – but with disastrous results. "Sophisticated Parisians adored that work," says Holzer, "but we didn't sell any at all here because Americans simply didn't understand it."

Over time, the US design world, most notably the architect Peter Marino, cottoned on to the Lalannes. Today, Marino reports that he uses Lalanne in 50 per cent of his residential work, and he personally owns 30 examples. He says their art resonates with "a wonderful honesty and artistically interpreted statement of nature". The Lalannes also feature in his commercial projects, including the Chanel boutiques in Beverly Hills and Hong Kong, the Dior Paris bou-

tique, the Four Seasons Hotel New York penthouse and the residential condominiums at 170 East End Avenue. Valentino is a long-standing client, while ex-Gucci designer Tom Ford took on desks topped by alligators for his Madison Avenue men's boutique. Reed Krakoff, creative director at Coach leather goods, commissioned Claude to create "love apples" from casts of his and his wife's lips.

For new collectors the attraction goes beyond a luxury label. "They're drawn to the rarity, the fact that the limited editions are very small, only eight in each, and the craft of the hand-finished surfaces," says Kasmin.

The fervour shows no sign of abating in the auction rooms. In May at Christie's Paris, Claude Lalanne's 2007 "Banquette Gingko" in copper and bronze jumped over its €20,000-€30,000 estimate price to fetch a hefty €151,000. "Without a doubt, the Lalannes are the hottest French designs of 2009," says James Zemaitis, Sotheby's New York design specialist.

Joshua Holderman, who holds the same position at Christie's, speaks of a demand for vintage Lalanne. "I have more than a dozen clients seeking particular Lalanne examples, like a sheep for their garden," he says, adding: "Most would never consider themselves collectors of design."

This, and the fact that on Park Avenue the Lalannes are the latest in a series of shows that have included such sculptors as Fernando Botero and Jean Dubuffet, indicates that the couple have firmly passed to the art side of the design/art debate.

*'Les Lalanne on Park Avenue', New York, September 13-November 20; [www.paulkasmingallery.com](http://www.paulkasmingallery.com)  
'Beyond Limits', Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, September 14-November 1; [www.chatsworth.org](http://www.chatsworth.org)*

Francois-Xavier's  
'Singe avise (tres grand)'  
2008. Also on  
Park Avenue





# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

ON THE SHELVES

The Home Observer  
Fall 2008

## The Odd Couple

*Lalanne(s): The Monograph*

BY DANIEL ABADIE  
Flammarion, \$125,  
November 2008

BY HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-  
PHILP

As elements of modern design and architecture invade the auction houses and museums as never before, it is a truly apt time to review the contributions of Francois-Xavier and Claude Lalanne. The husband-and-wife team has worked together and separately for five decades to create sculpture, furniture, jewelry and even interior and landscape designs with inimitable élan. Their work is exhibited in museums and galleries, yet acclaimed by magazines devoted to fashion and flair. The imagery draws from



sources as diverse as ancient Egypt and modern Surrealism, the human body and technology, as well as the flora and fauna of the natural world. And now Flammarion has documented their considerable output in *Lalanne(s): The Monograph*.

With a substantive and informative chronology, and excellent essays by art historian Daniel Abadie, the book treats les Lalannes with the respect that should be accorded serious and mature artists. Such an approach is doubly important here, since these artists still encounter a recurrent skepticism on the part of critics about the relationship between the decorative and fine arts.

Let there be no doubt about the impressive trajectory of their careers. Francois-Xavier came from Agen to Paris to study at the Académie Julian, and Constantin Brancusi was his influential neighbor as he began constructing his streamlined sculptures in the shapes of

animals. Claude was raised in Paris, and her father's interest in alchemy influenced her decision to cast and construct metal jewelry and furniture from leaves and flowers. In 1956, they combined their efforts, initially doing window displays for Christian Dior and set designs for Maurice Béjart. Married in 1962, the couple's first show was held in 1964 at Galerie J, run by Jeanine de



*Singe Aux Nénuphars*  
(2007) by Claude and  
Francois-Xavier Lalanne.

Goldschmidt, the wife of influential critic Pierre Restany.

The inventive insouciance of les Lalannes was greeted enthusiastically by critics and journalists, including poet John Ashbery in the *New York Herald Tribune*. By the late 1960s, one could scarcely open a magazine without seeing Francois-Xavier's flock of woolly sheep used as seating arrangements, his baboon

animals. Claude was raised in Paris, and her father's interest in alchemy influenced her decision to cast and construct metal jewelry and furniture from leaves and flowers. In 1956, they combined their efforts, initially doing window displays for Christian Dior and set designs for Maurice Béjart. Married in 1962, the couple's first show was held in 1964 at Galerie J, run by Jeanine de



An early photograph of les Lalannes in their studio. Right: *La Pleureuse* (1986) by Francois-Xavier.



The Home Observer  
Fall 2008

## PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

with a belly that doubled as a fireplace, or his life-size leather rhinoceros that could be dismantled and used as a set of chairs. Claude designed silver place settings blooming with flower stems and petals, plus outrageous botanical jewelry, such as a necklace of cast cannabis leaves.

From the gate, such pieces attracted a dedicated following of adventuresome collectors, like the late, great Yves Saint Laurent, who showed Claude's jewelry of gilded cast breasts and torsos with his collections in the '60s. The work was given a survey at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1967, and the following year Francois-Xavier was awarded a Chevalier des Arts et Lettres. And while les Lalannes rode high on that decade's international infatuation with irreverence, they did not stall mid-career, but continue to produce more ambitious pieces. Chanel boutiques now feature Francois-Xavier's recent sculptures—the fascination has not waned.

But the question is sure to be raised—is it art? Dali had a hunch, and asked Claude to design a set of silverware for him—and then was so impressed with the results that he signed it as his own. (Undaunted, Claude proceeded to make even more outrageous knives, forks, and spoons.) Abadie has written quite a bit about Magritte and Surrealism, the soil in which les Lalannes germinated, and he makes clear that the couple's efflorescence was part of the Nouveau Realism movement and the manifestation of Pop Art sensibilities in France. He also holds up examples such as Christo, Scott Burton and Donald Judd, all of whom made furniture or embraced the fusion of sculpture with the environment. Ultimately, he cites Jean Cocteau in an effort to put the artist/artisan question to bed: "Since all these mysteries are beyond us, let's pretend we're behind them."

In the end, one comes away with the conclusion that les Lalannes were pioneers who sidestepped the traditional boundaries between art and craft, design and architecture, creativity and function. There are plenty who agree. Just last year, their recent sculpture was shown at the Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York. The response was almost as heated as their debut in the '60s. With over 300 pages and 250 photographs, this book chronicles the continuing saga.



***Empreinne Taille (1968)*** by  
**Claude Lalanne.**



## Report card '06

Our experts grade the year that was in arts, culture and city living  
PLUS: THE OUTLOOK FOR '07

Dec. 28, 2006--Jan. 3, 2007

# PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Art | Reviews

## Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne



Art

★★★★★

Paul Kasmin Gallery, through Jan 13 (see Chelsea)

Parisian decorative artists Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne rose to prominence in the 1960s with functional objects that combined the bohemian spirit of Bloomsbury with the strange imagery of Surrealism. At Kasmin, the Lalannes' smaller works resemble bronze characters attending a costume ball in a scene dreamed by Dalí. There is an apple with a human mouth, a cabbage standing on chicken feet and a snail with two human fingers poking out of its shell. A set of cutlery, named for the Greek charioteer Iolas, looks like it's been pasted together from pieces of a caryatid's toga.

Most of the large-scale works double as furniture. The

*Rhinocrétaire II (Grand)* is, as its name suggests, part rhinoceros, part secretary (writing desk, not amaneunsis). Inside *Hippopotame II*, a wet bar in the form of a hippo, an ice bucket nests in the animal's ear. The belly of the stalwart *Babouin* (baboon) opens to reveal a fireplace. *Banc Crocodile*, fabricated in 2006, is a bench whose seat is fashioned from sea grass. Its most prominent feature, located just beneath the seat, is a pair of crocs chasing each other's tails.

In each case, form trumps function and wit wins out over practicality. But while it might be hard to imagine actually using any of the Lalannes' objects, it isn't hard to picture living with them. Fantastic celebrations of the quotidian, they remind us that the rituals of daily life make living itself an art.—Bridget L. Goodbody

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