

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS

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CLAUDE & FRANÇOIS-XAVIER LALANNE

Private View – Tuesday, September 27, 2011 6 – 8pm

Running Dates – September 28 – November 12, 2011

PRESS CONFERENCE – TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 - 3PM

Ben Brown Fine Arts is exceptionally proud to present the first Asian exhibition of works by influential French sculptors, Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne. The Lalannes came of age in the 1960s, and for more than five decades, their special blend of luxurious sensuality and earthly irreverence held court amongst the most avant-garde of collectors. This is the second exhibition of works by Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne held by Ben Brown Fine Arts, and follows on from a major retrospective held in 2010 at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs.

There is often the misconception that the Lalannes collaborate together, but they are two rather distinct oeuvres, as Pierre Bergé notes, *"their work, exemplary, is underscored by the pursuit of perfection, an unbending technique, a quest for achievement. Nothing is left to chance. A draughtsman in his own right, Francois-Xavier executes his work with precision strokes. Claude, more bucolic, has created her very own bestiary and herbarium. Her work is more fragile."* Where Francois-Xavier creations are bulky and streamlined, Claude's twists and turns reflect the Sixties resurgence of interest in Art Nouveau.

Surrounded by the artists of their generation, surrealists of the period, Max Ernst, Magritte and Victor Brauner, the Lalannes set the course on their path between high and decorative art; carving a middle ground no better epitomized than the jovial attitudes found distinct throughout their oeuvre. Blending classicism with invention, merging fantastical and baroque, the Lalannes have worked together to create an imaginary world easily enjoyed by all.

Many of the Lalannes greatest admirers have been the luminaries of high fashion; from younger stalwarts Tom Ford and Marc Jacobs, to Giancarlo Giacometti of Valentino and Coco Chanel, who reputedly let woolly Lalanne *moutons*, graze in her living room. Most similarly Reed Krakoff, Executive Creative Director of Coach, lives with a flock of his own Lalanne sheep, nestled throughout his living room, remarking, *"Claude and Francois-Xavier Lalannes' life is their art. Being exposed to their world has only intensified my deep appreciation of their extraordinary work."*

A young Francois-Xavier working as a guard at the Louvre studied with curiosity the Egyptian collection, obviously inspired by the iconography and also Hindu deities of the museum. Among his works in the show is a bronze console table, whose woven vine legs are embraced and balanced by a Gorilla peeking out from under glass. Smaller, devil-may-care jumping dogs play a tongue in cheek contrast to the beautifully constructed and minimally designed structure of the sculptures. For Francois-Xavier, *"Animals are the centre of our vocabulary because they are so varied. There is a whole variety to animal forms; between the fish, the bird, the monkey, and then there are metaphors connected to each animal."*

Blending organic and baroque, Claude Lalanne, employs the technique of electro plating to form sensitive sculptures mainly in animal and plant forms. A highlight of Claude's works in the exhibition are her romantic mirrors, most notably recognizable as those similar to ones commissioned by Yves St Laurent for his Paris apartment, later included in the designer's monumental estate sale by Christie's in 2008. Many of her works are fashioned from sinuous vines and leaves, twisted into candelabra, garden benches, and jewelry belie a poetic beauty.

About Les Lalannes

Claude Lalanne (b. 1924) was born in Paris and studied architecture at the École des Beaux-Arts and at the École des Arts Décoratifs. Francois-Xavier Lalanne (1927 – 2008) was born in Agen and studied painting at the Académie Julian in Paris. Their works are represented in many prominent public collections around the world including, The National Design Museum (New York); and Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne/Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris); amongst others.

Claude Lalanne will be in Hong Kong for the opening, and is available for select interviews.

LONDON: 21 CORK STREET FIRST FLOOR LONDON W1S 3LZ AND 12 BROOK'S MEWS LONDON W1S 4DG
T+44 (0)20 7734 8888 INFO@BENBROWNFINEARTS.COM F+44 (0)20 7734 8892

HONG KONG: 301 PEDDER BUILDING 12 PEDDER STREET CENTRAL HONG KONG
T+852 2522 9600 HKOFFICE@BENBROWNFINEARTS.COM

WWW.BENBROWNFINEARTS.COM