

# Leonor Fini – Écrits d'effroi

**17.10-23.11.2024**

This exhibition focuses on the relationship between the work of Leonor Fini (1907-1996) and literature. While modernism was always wary of *narrative*, Surrealism celebrated the fertile marriage of text and image. Yet painting is absent from the Premier manifeste, whose centenary we celebrate this year. In April 1925, the provocative Pierre Naville went so far as to assert, in the third issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*: *no one is unaware that there is no such thing as surrealist painting. Neither the strokes of a pencil left to the chance of gesture, nor the image tracing dream figures, nor imaginative fantasies, of course, can be so qualified.* Reacting to this negative attitude, André Breton himself followed up with his programmatic work Le surréalisme et la peinture, in which he asserted that *the work of art, in response to the need for an absolute revision of real values on which all minds now agree, would either refer to a purely interior model, or not at all.*



Henri Cartier-Bresson  
André Pieyre de Mandiargues  
and Leonor Fini, Trieste, 1933

Cultured and even literate, a seismograph of *purely interior models*, Leonor Fini's relationship with literature was an enriching one from an early age, in both senses of the word: While her art inspired the words of leading authors such as Paul Éluard, Jean Genet, Alberto Moravia and Alberto Savinio, and while her correspondence with André Pieyre de Mandiargues fascinatingly captures *the shadow cast* by their passionate relationship, her drawings and engravings became inseparable from the books they transfigured rather than illustrated; Charles Baudelaire, Jean de La Fontaine, Edgar Allan Poe and Pauline Réage all share her keen eye for the human soul. And then there are her own books, fairy tales, and the plays she helped bring to life, notably represented in the exhibition by a sublime watercolor and preparatory ink for a costume in Victor Hugo's Lucrezia Borgia.

Entitled *Écrits d'effroi*, and arranged around a one-scale mannequin in the form of a self-portrait, created in 1973 for the presentation of her jewel Sujet en or, this exhibition offers a veritable concentration of Leonor Fini's *intimate macabre theater*, about which Jean Genet famously declared : *Would I be so passionate about a work if I hadn't discovered in it and from its very formation not what I'm moving towards - and which will belong to me alone - but those same desperate elements scattered throughout mortuary pomp ? - but those same desperate elements scattered across the mortuary pomp ?*

Born in Argentina, raised in Italy in a refined environment, Leonor Fini spoke six languages, arrived in Paris in 1931 and exhibited there for the first time the following year, at the Galerie Bonjean, directed by Christian Dior, with a presentation by curator Jean Cassou. Having become extremely popular since her last retrospective at the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris in 1986, only a few monographic exhibitions have celebrated her work, in European or Japanese museums. In recent years, however, her work has at last received a fresh look. Recently exhibited at the Venice Biennale and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, and by the Tommaso Calabro, Paul Kasmin, Minsky and White Cube galleries, Fini is also featured in the current *Surrealism* exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, while we await the retrospective currently in preparation, which will definitively reassess her place in history.

**Stéphane Corréard & Hervé Loevenbruck**

**Leonor Fini**

*Histoire d'O*

Circa 1960

Watercolor and ink on paper

41 × 30 cm



**Leonor Fini**

*Lucrezia Borgia*

Circa 1964

Watercolor and ink on paper

Signed lower center

43,5 × 31 cm



**Leonor Fini**

*La Fanfarlo*

Circa 1968

Watercolor and ink on paper

Signed lower right

20 × 28 cm



**Leonor Fini**

*Untitled (Selfportrait),*

1973

Oil, fabric and plaster on paper  
mashed

178 × 48 × 38 cm

