



GILLES AILLAUD *PLAGES ET DÉSERT*

02.06.2020 – 27.06.2020

Gilles Aillaud (1928-2005) was not just a painter of animals locked in their cages in zoos or at liberty in their natural habitat (in Kenya, for example), even if those are the themes that established – and sometimes confined – his reputation within the *figuration narrative* tendency.

In the late 1970s he depicted, in very large formats, the arid mountain landscapes of Skyros (Greece). These paintings were first seen in his retrospective at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (MAMVP), titled "Le Proche et le lointain," in 1980. This show brought to public attention a "different" Gilles Aillaud, an artist who treats Mount Hagia Niki like a Sainte-Victoire in the flattening natural light of the Greek summer – as opposed to the raw artificial light of the animal cages. In the early 1980s Brittany inspired him to paint shores with distant horizons with lively currents at low tide surging amidst the kelp-covered rocks (*Rochers d'Audierne*, 1985). After a trip to Egypt in 1987 he painted the banks of the Nile, its delta, the Dead Sea, the desert (*Désert*, 1987). The following year, "La Mer dans tous ses états" comprised forty little pictures, a set of fleeting images – reality, he says, is hard to grasp – of "decisive moments" in the movements of the ocean over the beach at Biarritz.

During the 1990s the artist made six very large paintings on paper (from 3 to 9 metres wide), often in acrylic and all representing the flight of birds against sweeping maritime skies (*Les Mouettes* [Seagulls], 1992, was the first in this ensemble), and another dozen oil paintings on the same theme. Some of these featured in the exhibition "Deadline" at the MAMVP in 2009-2010, a show that featured late works by twelve major painters of the 20th century.

These landscapes are not random productions. They are here because the artist saw them and felt something about them, without having to delve into his imagination. The light, swift touch, the almost "daubed" handling and the refusal to correct avert all risks of academicism, if that were necessary. The Brittany and Normandy beaches of Argenton, Audierne and Hauteville speak for all other beaches.

Exhibited artworks:

Les mouettes, August 9, 1992, acrylic on paper, 41 5/16 × 216 9/16 in (105 × 550 cm)

Plage d'Hauteville, 1990, oil on canvas, 78 3/4 × 102 3/8 in (200 × 260 cm)

« La mer dans tous ses états », 1988, oil on canvas, variable dimensions

Désert, 1987, oil on canvas, 66 1/8 × 78 3/4 in (168 × 200 cm)

Rochers d'Audierne, 1985, oil on canvas, 63 × 78 3/4 in (160 × 200 cm)

Visual: Gilles Aillaud, *Plage d'Hauteville* (detail), 1990, oil on canvas, 78 3/4 × 102 3/8 in (200 × 260 cm).
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The Catalogue Raisonné of Gilles Aillaud's paintings' body of work is established by the **Fonds Gilles Aillaud / Galerie de France**, under the direction of Catherine Thieck.

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Gallery opening hours: Tue-Sat, 11am-7pm and by appointment