

INTERNATIONAL Herald Tribune

Published with The New York Times and The Washington Post

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PARIS, SATURDAY-SUNDAY, MAY 3-4, 1980

Galleries in Paris

Henri Michaux, Le Point Cardinal, 3 Rue Jacob, Paris 6, to June 15.

Henri Michaux, a major French poet in a century in which authentic poets are rare (and it may not be irrelevant that he is a reluctant native of Belgium), is also a major and inimitable figure in contemporary art. In recent years, he has devoted himself increasingly to art, and anyone who has taken an interest in painting over the past decades can-

not have failed to see some of his characteristic drawings in india ink — a dance, or battle or universal panic flight of ink blots often covering the whole page — or at least a few of his paintings, watercolors or mesaline drawings.

His latest exhibition at Le Point Cardinal assembles oils, ink drawings and ectoplasmic watercolors once again, and though the form is familiar, the individual works manage to keep the freshness of a new event. It is exactly like a recurring dream that never ceases to arouse the same emotion. Certainly the form varies somewhat from one painting to the next, just as the dream changes from night to night. But the dominant impression is that each one of Michaux's blots designates a sentient being, and once this is established each painting appears as the scene of intense and significant events.

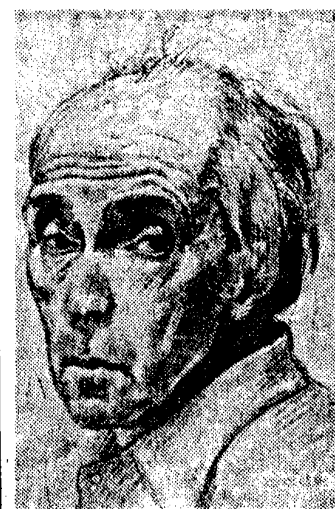
An American critic, writing about his show at the Guggenheim Museum in 1978, described the effect as repetitious. I would say that this impression is the result of a misunderstanding. The works are not really conceived to be seen as a sequence all together, and do not gain much from being assembled in large numbers (a gallery show, however is just the right scale). This is so because each painting can stand

on its own and requires no support or confirmation from any other. In fact, it confronts the viewer like an individual being whose originality can only be perceived in conditions of intimacy, and not as he scrambles with thousands of others through a crowded railway station during the evening rush hour.

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Raphael Soyer, Albert Loeb, 10 Rue des Beaux-Arts, Paris 6, to May 31.

Raphael Soyer has a number of points in common with Edward Hopper, who was 10 years his senior. Both were attentive "realist"



R. Soyer "Self-portrait."

painters in an age in which such undertakings were not rated very high. Hopper came into his own only in the last decades, when the public became aware of the authentic, silent quality of his painting. Soyer is also receiving serious recognition now, and it is significant that his drawings should be on display today in a Paris gallery that is hardly to be characterized by its conservative tendencies.

This is entirely right, because Soyer is quite beyond the "retrograde vs. avant garde" criteria of classification. His outlook and style clearly belong to the prewar decades, but this is appropriate because that was his period and his outlook, and there is no nostalgic aftertaste in his work. Soyer just looked at the way people lived — as did, say, Daumier in his own day, and he deserves to be compared to Daumier, not necessarily as a painter, but because of the attentive sympathy and gravity of his vision. The present show is devoted to portraits (self-portraits, portraits of his wife) and nudes. They are unassuming works and could be quite easily ignored in the general brashness of the art world. Which would be a shame.

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Also worth a detour is an exhibit of Amazonian Indian plumage, collected in Brazil by Roberta Rivin and displayed in its full sumptuousity at her Galerie Urubamba (7 Rue de la Bucherie, Paris 5, to May 10).

— Michael Gibson