RICO LEBRUN

TRANSFORMATIONS/TRANSFIGURATION

"...changing what is disfigured into what is transfigured."

Ellen C. Oppler

13 November 1983—18 January 1984
Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery, Syracuse University
School of Art, College of Visual and Performing Arts
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For Constance, and the Memory of Rico, Charlotte and Alfred
Syracuse University Art Galleries

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guest curator, Dr. Ellen C. Oppler, Associate Professor, Department of Fine Arts, College of Arts and Sciences at Syracuse University. Dr. Oppler's masterful selection of the artist's works and her creative orchestration of the catalogue and installation have clearly demonstrated the power and depth of Rico Lebrun's vision.

The exhibition and catalogue focus largely on paintings related to Lebrun's great Crucifixion Triptych, located in the lobby of Hersey Hall on the campus of Syracuse University, and highlight a new perspective for evaluating the work of this important American artist, whose concern with formal values did not eclipse the human content of his art.

Our deepest debt of gratitude goes to the artist's widow, Mrs. Constance Lebrun Crown, without whose generous and tireless support an exhibition of this scope and quality could not have been organized. She has lent superb works from the Lebrun Estate whose generous and tireless support an exhibition of this scope and quality could not have been organized. She has lent superb works from the Lebrun Estate whose concern with formal values did not eclipse the human content of his art.

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Joseph A. Scala
Director
Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery

RICO LEBRUN

The Paintings and Drawings: His Life and Work

Ellen C. Oppler

Born 1900 in Naples, Italy, Rico Lebrun recalled his native place as "a town of dream and delight and also of sordid life. A town of abysmal darks and dazzling lights..."1 He recalled especially vividly the people's frequent participation in their patron saint's annual miracle, when the petrified blood in its sacred flask was expected to liquify as a blessed sign of benevolence. To be in the midst of the people waiting for that miracle in the Cathedral of San Gennaro "was a frightening and awesome experience...it was like being inside of a clanging bell."

This collective and fierce will, convinced that it could change the world into the alive, has never been put to a better use. The miracle was that death viewed, gain wise to faith triumphant. Which goes for painting also.2

It would make many hard decades of work and Lebrun could witness such miracles in his art.

As a young student, he attended several technical schools, and experienced the last year of the war (see Chronology for details). He studied at the usual provincial art academy where a "frigid sort of academicism was the rule" and the pupils produced "some of the ugliest drawings" he had ever seen—horribly competent renderings of plaster casts.3 The vanguard adult painters were not much better, working in a form of Impressionism that seemed to him totally inappropriate "to the carnal and tangible quality of the town, which in fact only baroque masters of southern Italy had previously understood.4 Hence he frequented the museums and found inspiration in the old masters. Lebrun also felt "the backwash of futurism and cubism" filtering through to Naples, and was excited when he could hear the poet Filippo Marinetti and the painter Giacomo Balla expound their theories. He expected to become the greatest Futurist draftsman of the South.5 Among friends of his father (a railroad official) writers—and the young Rico considered becoming a journalist, for his gift with words was as evident as his talents with pencil and brush.

But he was prepared to earn his living as a commercial artist. As designer for a stained-glass factory in Naples that had secured a contract with Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company in the United States, Lebrun was sent to Springfield, Illinois, in early 1924. He was promoted to foreman in the new plant and instructor in stained-glass techniques, and when his contract was completed in 1925, he moved to New York City.

Lebrun became an extraordinarily successful commercial artist during the next decade, drawing advertisements and illustrations for such prestigious magazines as Vogue, Fortune, and The New Yorker. He was able to take two extended trips back to Italy to study fresco painting with an established artist in Rome, where he also became friends with a fellow student from the states, Lewis Rubenstein. Upon his return to New York, he continued supporting himself with commercial work, but his ambition now was to paint murals.

Many years later, a close artist-friend recalled Lebrun's amazing performance for a meeting of commercial artists, responding to a young designer's question:

Young man (he quavered), when we were your age I had the Ivory Soap account (sententious), I taught the whole country how to wash... The last week I worked I made twenty-thousand dollars (suddenly staccato) and I quit! (pause—then simple-minded, childish, obdurate), 'cause I don't like it.6

Lebrun's several attempts to put his fresco training to practice—upon returning from Rome—were ambitious but short-lived; a mural that he painted with Rubenstein on the top floor of Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum was soon wallowed over. His project, "Story of the Mines," was never carried out, though...
it won him a Guggenheim Fellowship for 1935-36 and was renewed for a second year. Under WP A sponsorship he designed, and to a great extent, painted a vast mural for the New York Post Office Annex, but that, too, was later covered over. Not until 1960 was he to realize his vision of a great and enduring mural for our age, a 20th-century interpretation of Biblical events.

As instructor at the Art Students League during 1935-36, Lebrun gained another experience that became a lifetime commitment. When he first moved to California, he supported himself by teaching. Later he frequently supplemented his income by serving as a visiting professor at various institutions (see Chronology). And although teaching drained energy from his own creative work, he also thrived on these contacts with young artists, and was a renowned and inspiring teacher who left an important heritage, especially in California.

The move to California in 1938 was a turning point. Visiting Channing Peake, his young friend and assistant from the WP A mural project, Lebrun settled in Santa Barbara, and began teaching in Los Angeles. He gained a strong supporter in Donald Bear, director of the new Santa Barbara Museum, who organized his first solo exhibitions and wrote most intelligently about his art. Although Lebrun returned to New York in 1943-44 and gained recognition in important group shows at the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, he made Southern California his actual and artistic home.

In the fertile Santa Ynez Valley high up beyond the coastal range above Santa Barbara, he found the romantic American West dear to Europeans; the vast plains that delighted the city dweller from New York and cramped Neapolitan streets, and even houyhnhnem cows and ranchers who taught him how to ride and hunt. Channing Peake and his wife had acquired a ranch where he started breeding race horses.

He began sketching rusty old farm implements abandoned by previous owners of the ranch. These corroded plows, harrows, and wagons—scattered like found objects over the land—inspired also Lebrun to paint the first work to gain national recognition. His Vertical Composition is a handsome semi-abstract design created from the wheel and broken axle of an old wagon, standing on end like a mysterious totem of the earth, not unlike David Smith's sculptures of the same period, and the box. The Farm Machine (No. 1) in our exhibition is an early example of Lebrun's imaginative transformation of visual fact into personal statement. Yellow Plow (No. 2), actually a spring-tooth harrow, evokes the huge skeletal claws of some primeval creature, buried by late-afternoon sunlight. As Lebrun documented with his vivid commentary (p. 19, below), he "may have moved away from the human figure, but not from anatomy... Yes, that's when I really began to reason with the figure—when it wasn't there." But he needed the human form to express himself most fully, and he decided to find a theme that was universally meaningful; he found it in the Crucifixion cycle that engaged him intensely for well over three years and through hundreds of drawings and paintings. (See pp. 21-31, for his eloquent comments). Our ink drawing (No. 4) may well be his earliest idea for a Woman of the Crucifixion; it is dated Mars 19, 1947, and also inscribed in French. There is a funny personal comment (or a quotation to be identified) about the drawings of damned fools, and a proud declaration: "all alone but all's well with the world." Though these paintings are still clearly figurative, the paint itself conveys emotional content—the surface is scratched, spattered, and splashed. The thinned paint is encouraged to drip blood-red down the canvas (No. 6). The pigment in Ladder of the Cross (No. 16) is roughed up and tortured as Christ was tortured. In the monumental Cross (No. 17), the figure has all but disappeared, reduced to a cipher, the suggestion of a slumping body. The traditional symbols tell the story: the crown of thorns, shroud, and nails; the warped ladder and centurion's lance; shadows of the mocking sign that proclaimed Jesus the King of the Jews; and the bright lantern that illuminated the darkness of Golgotha. Spattered and scumbled paint textures soften the austere cubistic forms; golden whites, earth-toned blacks, and unexpected accents of light blue-green enrich the somber symbols tell the story: the crown of thorns, shroud, and nails; the warped ladder and centurion's lance; shadows of the mocking sign that proclaimed Jesus the King of the Jews; and the bright lantern that illuminated the darkness of Golgotha. Spattered and scumbled paint textures soften the austere cubistic forms; golden whites, earth-toned blacks, and unexpected accents of light blue-green enrich the somber.

Close-up details of these paintings, with their formal design and energetic paint surfaces, could even be taken for early Abstract Expressionism. They testify to Lebrun's appreciation of the technical innovation and stylistic freedom of his younger contemporaries, even though critics invariably contrasted Lebrun with avant-garde Action Painting. The battle line between the two "opposing camps" is not as securely drawn as the critics have pretended, and Lebrun could surprise friends by vigorously defending the Abstract Expressionists. What angered him most was being pigeonholed into the far corner of "content," as contrasted with "form." He declared that when it comes to taking sides, he is on the side of painting and no one else's. He could be deeply moved by "non-content painting" and thought that it might be "more ultimately useful and real in content" than the more obviously content-laden works.

To return to the Women of the Crucifixion, Lebrun's most memorable figures of the cycle: he recognized them as such, placing his proudest Magdalene under the cross, as recorded in the historic frontispiece photograph and recreated in our installation. She has replaced the divine or human figure traditional to the cross and has become the focal actor in the great drama. These women stand barefooted, digging their toes into the earth, as if determined to fight and hold their ground, their voluminous cloaks stiffened and emblematic of their fortitude. Around 1949-50, Lebrun fashioned a plaster of his Woman of the Crucifixion. Not cast in bronze, the sculpture has disappeared, but the sculptural image returned as a true resistance fighter, one of the heroic women of Caiaphas who tricked the Nazi soldiers (No. 48 and pp. 16-17, below). While the women gain our empathy and admiration, the soldiers are subhuman beings. In the Natural History wing of the Los Angeles County Museum, Lebrun had fashioned the armored creatures there. He had studied and drawn the primordial armadillos and Matamata turtles (No. 8).
Evil nocturnal creatures, mechanical men “armored with Leonard Baskin on the woodcuts for Melville’s Encantadas horizontal beam (Nos. 13 and 14). In Lebrun’s words, this ancient legend of evil sea captains doomed to appear to crucify themselves. Contrary to the between their teeth, sprawling comically across the paintings—the blank partition Deposition. He restated several main themes of already completed composition is the sharp crown of thorns: we never seeing Christ’s face—the better to identify with his suffering, indeed, with humanity’s suffering. A sinister face and documents, perhaps symbolizing all executions, all those who commit crimes against their fellow beings. While this ominous face nearly vanishes in deepest shadow, a bright spotlight forms sharp, geometric planes of light and draws our attention to the left-hand panel, the sun disk has absorbed the crescent moon. An energetically crowning rooster, earlier associated with Peter’s denial of Christ, now joyfully heralds the new day, the brilliant dawn of the resurrection and of a new era. It is a sign of promise and of hope. Should the spectator, nevertheless, not associate the Crucifixion cycle with our own inhuman age. Lebrun included contemporary mementos in his 1950-51 exhibition. There were long canvases of modern weaponry: an immaculately painted machine gun; the treads of tanks, crushing bits of green vegetation; with mechanically meshed wires leaving their imprint in the soft oil paint (No. 11); and huge black tanks consumed in orange condensation (No. 12), evoking the ultimate apocalypse—Hieronymus Bosch’s vision of Hell. More specifically, Lebrun cited a contemporary view of hell on earth: Picasso’s Guernica. Designed for the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris International Exhibition in 1937, Guernica thereafter traveled to England and throughout America, raising funds for Spanish refugee relief. Lebrun would have seen it in Los Angeles at the Stendhal Gallery in August 1939, and again during his 1943-44 sojourn in New York, where Guernica remained “on extended loan” to the Museum of Modern Art. Frequently reproduced in the popular press and in art publications, Guernica by the late 1940s was a notorious modern painting and an influential anti-war statement. By alluding to Guernica, Lebrun could encourage his viewers to associate his Crucifixion Triptych with modern warfare. He especially admired Guernica’s appeal to ordinary people, not just to art connoisseurs: “My sister tells me that there is a reproduction of it in home after home in Italy,” he informed his interviewer. Guernica. Pablo Picasso’s major work, is of special meaning to us, since through it, once more, in the stream of true tradition, a great painter speaks to mankind of mankind’s fate. To the “purists” of painting who decry the validity of the human image in art, Guernica stands as a taunting reprimand. It is not a “pure” work, i.e. It is not painting for painting’s sake, but on the contrary, as it uses literary, psychological, symbolical elements, it gains impressive universality of meaning. Without the preceding phases of cubism, dynamism, multiple-vision, this work would not have been possible. But those elements achieve a synthesis of staggering eloquence they never had as isolated elements, because Guernica is the sum total of a mighty intellect and an unshrinking heart.

Rico Lebrun, 1959-60 (216:44)

That Guernica became Lebrun’s exemplar is obvious, especially for the Crucifixion. The works share a similar grisaille monochrome and tripartite organization culminating in a central triangle; both fuse cubicist and expressionist, figurative and abstract elements. Even the large scale and dimensions are comparable (Lebrun’s horizontal section is 11’ 4” x 26’ to Guernica’s 11’ 5½” x 20’ 5¼”), and both were painted rapidly in five to six weeks for a designated space. The comparison was to haunt Lebrun for much of his life, not just in reviews of the Crucifixion cycle, when the stylistic debt was there, but in later criticism, when he had developed his own idiom. Already in 1941, Lebrun evidently discussed Guernica at length with Donald Bear, who wrote that few living artists could use it, certainly none could dismiss it. And he concluded by quoting Lebrun, who named Masaccio, Raphael, Daumier, and Picasso as his teachers, but emphasized that the difference would be recognized “between the museum pantomime and the meaningful individual adventure.”

There were other artistic mentors. Lebrun paid special homage to the early 16th century master, Matthias Grünewald, in an exquisitely colored Crucifixion drawing (No. 20) and his best lithograph (No. 21), both directly inspired by the central panel of Grünewald’s Isenheim altarpiece—but unlike Picasso’s variations of 1929-30. The Crucifixion theme, indeed, maintained its spell over Lebrun throughout the later 1950s. In such paintings as Black Golgota (No. 22), the Christ figure and mourners are abstracted, represented by the ladder and gestural movements speaking for the human drama. Frequently, the Crucifixion motif appears fused with images of concentration camp victims, a series of paintings Lebrun had begun in 1939. The year before his death, he created a final, splendid Crucifixion (No. 23); the warm colors glowing out of darkest shadow have suggested the descriptive title Black and Gold Golgota, to Lebrun’s family and friends. Stripped of their sheltering cloaks, the mourners appear vulnerable, their bodies leaning against the protective figure of Christ; the simplified but naturalistic forms draw us into their midst and invite our emotional participation. The harsh Crucifixions of the 1950s have been transformed into a peaceful resolution, comforting and compassionate.

Lebrun was at his best when he could submerge himself in an all-encompassing theme such as the Crucifixion; he liked to work in series of related images. He was again ready for such an artistic effort when he returned from Mexico in 1954, having worked on large sheets of wrapping paper, drawing and creating colorful and quite abstract collages. He chanced upon those horrendous newsworthy photographs of Nazi concentration camps being liberated by Allied soldiers. Lebrun had found the very images to activate the creative process he has described so eloquently (pp. 32-33, below). This process is clearly documented from paintings to drawings to generalization and artistic synthesis of “remembered” images. Our version of Buchenwald Cart (No. 24).
appears as a somber coda to the better-known version in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (No. 24A, not in the exhibition), completed already in late 1955. Again, Lebrun forced himself to confront the terrible photographs and made brutally detailed drawings for several versions of Buchenwald Floor (No. 24B, not in the exhibition).

His thoughts now turned toward an older historical plaque, the Black Death that decimated Europe in the fourteenth century, and he drew and painted variations of Francesco Traini’s Triumph of Death in the Campo Santo of Pisa. He focused on the climactic detail of the open coffins where death has impartially claimed king and commoner, even the Pope himself. Livid patches remind us that the colors of death are lent their bloated forms to the 20th-century detail of the open coffins where death has impartially claimed king and commoner, even the Pope himself. (No. 25). The decaying bodies of these plague victims lend their bloated forms to the 20th-century detail of the open coffins where death has impartially claimed king and commoner, even the Pope himself (No. 26), whose putrefying flesh with bloodied and scratched and tortured, “the spent furnace with the shadowy forms brushed with velvety blacks that captures the strength and valiant humor of the man:” (No. 27), In the Dachau Chamber (Nos. 28 and 29) with the darkly glowing colors of incineration, and paint surfaces scratched and tortured, “the spent furnace with fragments, islands here and there, of what had been the living body” (p. 32, below). In these awesome paintings, beautiful even with their deep, luminous colors and shattered forms, the artist indeed has painted his “form of remembrance and prayer...changing what is disregarded into what is transfigured.”

Several changes of scene and of pace now followed: namely, a visit to Yale University, where Lebrun’s commitment to figurative painting and his personal way with students collided with Josef Albers’ “Russian” personality. But his teaching at Yale-Norfolk summer school the year before brought visits from a young sculptor and graphic artist, Leonardo Baskin, who shared his interests. A return visit to Northampton produced the exhilarating experience of collaboration with a master craftsman on the Encaustics woodcuts (No. 30). Then another year abroad, in Rome as artist-in-residence at the American Academy, a time he used to develop his ideas for the Pomona mural.

The European sojourn strengthened Lebrun’s Italian roots, his love for his native tongue and great literature, and everywhere, encounters with ancient Roman marbles and classical art. Mrs. Lebrun Crown remembers especially their delight in the marble sculptures of the Museo delle Terme—the Baths of Diocletian—dramatically spotlighted at night. Even after the enormous exertion of painting the Pomona mural in half a year, Lebrun’s creative energies continued to pour into the astounding illustrations for Dante’s Inferno. As with his written comments about the Crucifixion, Lebrun has emphasized the universality of Dante’s masterpiece, and its relevance for our age (p. 36, below). And with his drawings, he has reinterpreted Dante’s imagery for the modern world.

Everything he had learned during a lifetime of drawing and painting, all that he knew about the expressive power of the human body, he now channelled into these late drawings. He had achieved total mastery; form and content were one, and he knew it. Mrs. Lebrun Crown recalled that he was happiest while painting the Pomona mural and working on the Dante drawings. “He was truly able to sing while he was doing them! He would say, ‘Pablo can’t touch me now!” He knew he was on his own and it was clear sailing.”

Though liberated from Picasso’s dominating influence, Lebrun maintained his dialogue with the European masters he admired. He often spoke and wrote about his special affinities with Spanish art, “its insistence on the agitation and the dramatic.” In a public lecture on El Greco and Goya, he declared: “They are my moral advisors.” His admiration for El Greco goes back to the 1930s when he sought permission to copy The Burial of Count Orgaz in Toledo. Goya’s importance came later. The passage quoted on p. 30 below, in his book is entitled, “On Working from Goya”—in 1957-58, he drew and painted several superb variations of Goya’s court portraits. He had been inspired by Goya’s witness to history and the human condition, the Goya of Los Caprichos and The Disasters of War. In his Dante drawings and other late work, Lebrun also recalled the tragic and monstrous “Black Paintings” of Goya’s old age.

As always, precise pen-and-ink drawings, absolutely clear anatomically and with Dante’s verses carefully inscribed (No. 31), precede the semi-abstractions, the shadowy forms brushed with velvety blacks that are more appropriate to Dante’s nightmare visions. Lebrun made his very personal selection of what Dantean imagery he wanted to capture. His special attention turned to Canto XXVIII and its ditches filled with the “sowers of discord” who are mutilated and split asunder (Nos. 35 and 36) in retribution for their special sins “to rend asunder what God had meant to be united.” John Ciardi, the poet and translator of Dante, pointed out that it required “Lebrun’s personal genius” and the revolutions of modern art that had freed artists from the bondage of “literal classical rules,” to create an imagery “of the inwardness of things as Dante had imagined it forth in poetry.”

Leonard Baskin, who designed the handsome book of reproductions, added his own tribute to Lebrun as Daedalus, “the supreme artist,” who reveals man’s grandeur and in the furore, “grandeur despooled and debauched. Here is the immensity of drama displayed. The fragile means charged to the building of monumental forms.”

And it was Baskin who repeatedly encouraged Lebrun to turn to sculpture, for he recognized the sculptural, “monumental forms” of his late drawings and paintings. Two Figures at Twilight of 1962 (No. 37), for instance, close cousins to the Dante figures evoke certain sculptural associations: the nocturnal glimpses of Roman marbles, and the fragmented human forms of Henry Moore—the sculptor whom both Constance and Rico Lebrun admired above all contemporaries. Some of Lebrun’s early sculptures, such as the Kicking Figure (No. 39) and tragic Mask (No. 43) reveal all the lessons of Rodin, and Standing Female Torso (No. 46), with sagging breasts, depicts tired old flesh as poignantly as did Rodin’s crouching old woman (She Who Was Once the Helmet-Maker’s Beautiful Wife, 1885).

Lebrun’s very last images, however, speak to us of resurrection, and the indomitable will of men and women to resist the enemy, whether it be an actual political foe (Memorial to Caiazzo, No. 48), some private terror perhaps (No. 49), and even death itself (Lazarus, No. 44). The spirit within this fragile body that breaks through the ropes and wrappings of Lazarus becomes a metaphor for art itself, ensuring man’s immortality.

Rico Lebrun’s last interview, from his hospital bed, captures the strength and valiant humor of the man: “All my life, I’ve seen the human form as a container for drama, for all the joy and for all the tragedy, at all times for everything... Sometimes I ask myself, why have I done the figure over and over again, over and over again? Is this a crazy thing to do? I know what the figure should be. Why the hell have I been trying to tell people what they look like? I don’t know, I
don't know. But it comes down to wanting to tell the truth about something. An artist must tell the truth—that's it.

In this exhibition and catalogue, we also are searching for the truth about this controversial artist, a fresh truth for ourselves in 1983. For Lebrun has been controversial. He delved into uncomfortable, often profoundly disturbing subject matter, and worked in formal modes apart from vanguard styles. Highly acclaimed in 1950, he was frequently condemned or ignored during the 1960s, prompting a fair-minded critic for The New York Times to write in 1963:

Rico Lebrun is so obviously a major artist that his lack of wider fame seems almost a willful repression on the part of the tastemakers. He has the impoliteness to feel strongly, respect tradition and reject novelty as invention.

Perhaps Lebrun will appear different in these pluralistic times, this so-called "postmodernist" period, when much abstract art is considered old-fashioned, when the younger artists have returned to the figure and have rediscovered expressionism. Perhaps we will find that by stubbornly pursuing his "art and life without compromise despite fashion, rejection and hostility," Lebrun now appears timeless, speaking for our time—in its very broadest sense.

The works of art of our century are the mirrors of our predicament...the image of man became transformed, distorted, disrupted and it finally disappeared in recent art...And something else must be added here: the very fact that a great work of art depicts the negative side in the fight for humanity is in itself a fulfillment of a high human possibility. The courage and the honesty which underlie such works, and the creative power which is able to grasp the negativity of the content by the positivity of form, is a triumph of humanity.
Notes to "The Paintings and Drawings: His Life"

1 Rico Lebrun, Drawings (Berkeley, 1961), pp. 5-6 (hereafter, Lebrun 1961).
2 Ibid., p. 8.
3 Ibid., p. 6.
4 Ibid., p. 7.
5 "Rico Lebrun typescript (1959-60), 208:02 (see Bibliography).
6 1961 and 1968.
7 See pp. 32-33, 1974 interviews with Mrs. Lebrun Crown; also my interviews with Barbara, as is another handsome work of that year, Black Flower (Mrs. Esther Bear collection; illustrated on p. 35 in Lebrun 1967).
8 Lebrun 1967, p. 21.
9 Many beautiful examples of these 1950s and earlier 1940s drawings, that achieve a Raphaelesque purity, are reproduced in Lebrun 1963 and Lebrun 1967.
10 See pp. 32-33, 1974 interviews with Mrs. Lebrun Crown; also my September 1983 conversations with her. He especially valued Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline.
11 An extreme example of such stereotypes would be Selden Rodman's book. The Insiders: Rejection and Rediscovery of Man in the Arts of Our Time (1960).
12 From Lebrun typescript, 309:18. He continues in his typically exuberant way: "The only tactics I have is to use with a painter's eye when a painting is a painting and when it is not. When it is not, no content in the world will make up for it. And no content, no talk about gangsters or rabbi or Jesus or the beauty will ever make up for the refusal of the painter to question the limits of his means every day and to weldage on the main content of painting, its actual increase of glory as matter shaped into idea. The rest is literature."
The Sculpture
Erin M. Stimmell

All his life an explorer of forms in two dimensions, Rico Lebrun discovered another aspect of himself in sculpture. The idea of sculpture intrigued him much as a support for his forms, but also as a skeleton, as the bone structure—the integral internal workings of his forms. The pieces in our exhibition that most clearly reveal their armatures are the Memorial to Caiazzo and the Cloaked Female Figure (Nos. 48 and 49). Lebrun continuously moved from piece to piece within the studio, interposing his sculptural work with periods of painting and drawing. The pliable wax was well-suited to his continuing concern with the human figure. Enamored of the body—its parts, its shape, and its motivations—Lebrun could explore the fortunes of human form was directly through sculpture.

Once Lebrun had created the wax model, and a decision had been made to cast the work, the search began for a foundry to take on the work of casting. Lebrun was not necessarily interested in creating a model that could be easily translated into bronze. He created from his need for expression: the forms were made with little concern for the technical difficulties inherent in rendering them permanent. The intervals of open and closed areas made delicate sections that often broke off, or were destroyed in the casting process. Thin sections of figures often were not strong enough to withstand pressure. Not many foundries were willing even to attempt the realization of these works. Those that did often made their own adjustments to the work to facilitate their involvement. Open sections were filled in and headless figures restored to the extent that any integrity, beauty, and character in the original piece were lost.

The tragedy of this sort of meddling can be easily imagined. What if Memorial to Caiazzo, with its exposure of both inner vulnerability and outer toughness, were a solid mass of bronze—yet there it is before us. "It's a figure, the enemy had gone; the Italians cleverly replied, "That cloak are seen separately from the front view, but in the side (and indomitable individuality. The tremendous energy of Soldier seems impossible in eight inches of bronze—yet there it is before us. Kicking Figure (No. 39) isolates one action possible of a myriad of human activities. Lebrun's analysis was as meticulous as it was profound. The single action of the Kicking Figure was as important to him as a tribute to larger concerns.

These larger concerns are best exemplified by Memorial to Caiazzo, commemorating a town in Italy that German soldiers passed through during World War II. They asked the Italians which way the enemy had gone; the Italians cleverly replied, 'That's the way,' and sent the Germans off to shoot their own troops. The Germans returned to the village and executed the Italian men in revenge. As in the Crucifixion, Lebrun doesn't focus on the primary actor in the event he chooses to portray. Rather, the tributes focus on the strength and courage of the townspeople—the survivors. Memorial to Caiazzo captures the spirit of the event with an outer cloak of resolve and toughness, but within this shield of bronze is an armature, a figure that is ultimately fragile. Openings of light within the shield reveal the vulnerability of the figure who presents herself with defiance.

Cloaked Female Figure continues the idea of an inner volume wrapped in an outer shell. The figure and cloak are seen separately from the front view, but in the back, the two ideas—figure and cloak—have become one. The bounding around the figure's legs recalls a continuing concern of Lebrun's: the body and spirit entrapped within, struggling to get out. With this figure, the struggle has been a successful one. The figure emerges triumphant.

Lebrun's Lazarus (No. 44) carries the concept of the bound figure to its ultimate conclusion. Here, the viewer must imagine the soul of the figure as it is...
Lebrun’s sculpture studio, circa 1963.

revealed by the outer structure. But this outer structure is not a box, or tomb; like a membrane, the wrappings and rope containing Lazarus, reveal a figure that must be alive. The ropes strain and the covering bunches over a form that seems only temporarily still. With Lazarus, Lebrun’s ideas of the capacity for human survival crystallize in a very special way. Often accused during his lifetime of being an artist concerned only with the darker impulses of man, Lebrun in his sculpture reveals a positive, realistic wisdom. Lebrun could not turn his vision from the troubled fortunes of humanity; he could only express his faith and hope in their ultimate resurrection.

NOTES TO “THE SCULPTURE”

1. FARM MACHINE NO. 1, 1947
   Oil on canvas
   36 × 72 (91 × 183)
   Signed and dated
   Michael Straight, Bethesda, MD

2. THE YELLOW PLOW, 1949
   Oil on board
   80 × 36 (203 × 91)
   Signed and dated
   Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, NY

A note about the catalogue:

Works of art are listed by themes within time periods, rather than in strictly chronological order. Height precedes width in dimensions given in inches (largest work in feet), and followed by centimeters in parentheses.

I have let the artist speak whenever possible, for he wrote most eloquently about his own art (ECO).

You will say, Why not let someone else write for you? It is embarrassing to speak for yourself and to explain. Far less, I can answer, than to have myself explained through the words of another.

Rico Lebrun, 1961 (see Bibliography)
I must start with the tangible object, the concrete. My aim is to fashion its equivalent concreteness in paint and line. To point up this quality of existence necessitates elimination, invention and abstraction. Abstraction is the concrete revealed.

To abstract is an intensely human function. Some very fine works of abstraction have been said to lack humaness. Yet they were performed by humans, are human works, which is far more pertinent than their looking like humans. On the other hand, the baseness of certain literalism in art is, at times, truly inhuman.

Rico Lebrun, 1949

The Whitney's Wood of the Holy Cross is his personal favorite (for want of a better word) ... he found a piece of charred wood in our fireplace one morning and carried it to his studio, where he worked on the painting—almost in a state of mystical ecstasy. He didn't stop until the painting was finished, and afterwards couldn't remember the painting process.

Constance Lebrun Crown, 1958

Personally I find that the context takes on meaning only when the connotation and the structure are one. One procedure for achieving this fusion is to fall, so to speak, into the middle of the visual field of a canvas and, without permitting any second thoughts or footnotes to interfere, to go from beginning to end, and only then to step back and consider what you have done while we bear from balance, geometry, anatomy, and other considerations.

Rico Lebrun, 1959-60

My insistence on the limited or monochrome key is due first, to the purpose of preparing material for the camera, and second, to my preference, on large scale, for the black-and-white range as a most potent carrier of visual shock—though not necessarily the only one.

In dealing with ideas, vision and techniques for the task of communicating to the many, I hope for the day when a few of us, by using contemporary techniques (the camera, animation, the handmade montage), will finally correlate some of the facts of contemporary vision, and collectively, even anonymously, say what we feel about the world around us.

Rico Lebrun, 1950

You ask me why I keep repeating the subject of the cross? My answer is when we will have definitely put an end to that chapter by treating each other and the rest of the world respectfully as human beings. To me the repetition of the symbol comes as a necessary act, it seems that I can thus make real its daily immanence, which we try to ignore with the joke that it will not happen here, while thousands are being maimed and destroyed by malice and terror every day.

Rico Lebrun, 1959-60 (216-25)

There came a time when I needed a subject, a theme, which could be put through successive illustrative variations, as a break from the self-centered procedure into which events and personal reverses had cornered me. The choice was a natural one. When I abandoned in my youth, with a sudden resolution, some things related to my former faith that I could not properly understand, I abandoned at the same time what that faith had of sustenance and clarity. Now, as an outcome of the war years, images related to the Crucifixion began to crowd in upon me in chains of ideas—not scattered thoughts, but a rosary, as it were, of meditation. In a way they were like a commentary on the nature of the Cross, the implement, and the actors.

Rico Lebrun, 1961
The crying women are, like all bereaved mothers, empty houses pierced by screams, for I have never seen pretty sorrow.

Rico Lebrun, 1950

4. MARY AT THE CROSS, 1947
Ink on paper
23⅝ X 19 (60 X 48)
Signed and dated: Mars 19, 1947
Estate of Rico Lebrun, Kennedy Galleries, New York City

5. WOMAN OF THE CRUCIFIXION, 1948
Ink and brown conté crayon on paper
24 X 19 (61 X 48)
Signed and dated
Constance Lebrun Crown

6. WOMAN OF THE CRUCIFIXION, 1948
Oil on canvas
70 X 40 (178 X 102)
Signed and dated
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT
Gift of the William C. Whitney Foundation

7. WOMAN OF THE CRUCIFIXION, 1948-50
Duco on Upson board
96 X 48 (244 X 122)
F. M. Hall Collection, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
10. WITNESS OF THE RESURRECTION, 1950

My choice of the theme, Crucifixion, was prompted by the constantly repeated history of man’s blindness and inhumanity. The soldiers, overburdened with armor like nocturnal animals, are the symbol of most of us armored against true compassion. Prejudice is cruel and extravagant....
Rico Lebrun, 1950

11. TREAD OF TANK, 1950
Charcoal on Upson board
35 1/2 x 96 (91 x 244)
Signed and dated
Estate of Rico Lebrun, Kennedy Galleries, New York City

12. BURNING TANK, 1950
Mixed media (casein) on Upson board
35 x 50 (89 x 127)
Signed and dated
Estate of Rico Lebrun, Kennedy Galleries, New York City

13. CARPENTER ON THE CROSS, 1950
Charcoal on Upson board
42 x 90 (107 x 229)
Signed and dated
Syracuse University Art Collections
Gift of Constance Lebrun Crown

14. CARPENTER ON THE CROSS, 1950
Ink and casein, on paper mounted on Upson board
65 1/2 x 68 1/2 (166 x 174)
Signed and dated
Syracuse University Art Collections
Gift of Constance Lebrun Crown

15. FIGURES AT THE CROSS, 1950
Charcoal on Upson board
60 x 40 (152 x 102)
Signed and dated
Syracuse University Art Collections
Gift of Constance Lebrun Crown

The carpenters of the cross are, as are all men who accept wages for execution, lunatics and wolves. They gesture accordingly, and finally here and there the prophesy of self-crucifixion is indicated.
Rico Lebrun, 1950

10. WITNESS OF THE RESURRECTION, 1950

Duco on Upson board
62 x 96 (158 x 244)
Signed and dated: 1951 (probably later; believed to be identical with Two Sleeping Soldiers, No. 81 of 1950 exhibit)
Syracuse University Art Collections
Gift of Constance Lebrun Crown

11. TREAD OF TANK, 1950
Oil (and Duco?) on Upson board
35 1/2 x 96 (91 x 244)
Signed and dated
Estate of Rico Lebrun, Kennedy Galleries, New York City

12. BURNING TANK, 1950
Mixed media (casein) on Upson board
35 x 50 (89 x 127)
Signed and dated
Estate of Rico Lebrun, Kennedy Galleries, New York City

13. CARPENTER ON THE CROSS, 1950
Charcoal on Upson board
42 x 90 (107 x 229)
Signed and dated
Syracuse University Art Collections
Gift of Constance Lebrun Crown

14. CARPENTER ON THE CROSS, 1950
Ink and casein, on paper mounted on Upson board
65 1/2 x 68 1/2 (166 x 174)
Signed and dated
Syracuse University Art Collections
Gift of Constance Lebrun Crown

15. FIGURES AT THE CROSS, 1950
Charcoal on Upson board
60 x 40 (152 x 102)
Signed and dated
Syracuse University Art Collections
Gift of Constance Lebrun Crown

10. WITNESS OF THE RESURRECTION, 1950

Duco on Upson board
62 x 96 (158 x 244)
Signed and dated: 1951 (probably later; believed to be identical with Two Sleeping Soldiers, No. 81 of 1950 exhibit)
Syracuse University Art Collections
Gift of Constance Lebrun Crown
This was a period in which I could go from one picture to another as a speaker goes from one phrase to another—the wood of the Cross, the ladder, the signs, the nails, the hammer, the uniforms of slaughter, the black of mourning. I think it was Melville who had given me courage to do this when he wrote about the spade, the lance, the tow-rope.

As events had troubled the face of the earth, so did I now feel the need to trouble the plane of the picture. Far more than for aesthetic effects I worked for psychological meaning. The steps of the ladder of the Cross must have been hard ones to climb; so my rendering had perforce to be hard to read, uneven and obscure. Similarly, I wanted to paint the close-ups of the other implements with which I started the cycle (shroud, hammer, nails) in the nature of an apparition.

Rico Lebrun, 1961
The large triptych which concluded the cycle was executed in six weeks. My assistants and I faced a technical problem, because it was impossible to assemble the triptych—it was painted in sections—in its entirety in the space we had in the studio. We solved this problem with the help of photographic montage scaled to a smaller version which we would report to the final painting. Our calculations proved correct, because there was not a single change to be made when the work was finally shown in the Los Angeles County Museum and we could see it in its entirety. Needing a medium which would dry fast because of my way of quickly and repeatedly reworking a picture, I was at this time using lacquers. I found them enormously resilient and alive as a medium. Relatively new in the equipment of the painter of today, these lacquers have not been given enough time to prove their worth as a lasting medium.

If a choice must be made between durability and spiritual pertinence, no painter worth his salt would hesitate in favor of the latter.

Rico Lebrun, 1961
Occasionally I like to select a mentor, a master, and let him guide me through a revision of one of his paintings. When I do this I forget for a time the option of taking on nature or my own images and I adopt the image of some other man. Periodically I need to take sustenance in this way. By either understanding or misunderstanding lyrically—which is my right to do—his basic intentions, I try to see how much I can transform what he did. I try to move into his terrain, bringing my own ammunition.

I do not believe by even the most pious stretch of conscience that this belittles my own personality. It seems to me that, as in music, to take a theme already in existence and to write meaningful variations on this theme is one of the most challenging tasks an artist can face. Not mechanically and not as a virtuoso manifestation of daring, but because there are certain themes in paint—or words, or notes—which lend themselves to fresh reading and consequent new discoveries.

Rico Lebrun, 1961

The blocking in of large masses, simulating boldness, is often a promissory note which we will not be able to honor later. It is, in fact, the story of the particular which leads properly to the general. A false reading of the particular will change the entire structure. Grünewald’s arms grew from the web of arterial net to the surface, yet not as anatomy but as a river commanding the nature of the terrain. In him the minute and the particular are the true lead to the eccentric unfolding of form, the uncoiling of a map full of relevance.

Rico Lebrun, 1961

I have recently painted a new version of it [the Crucifixion], and this is a bird of a different color—and a bird of many colors, because suddenly as a legitimate reaction to the period of the Crucifixion, after having been in Mexico and seen what Mexico is like and remembering what I am supposed to be as a painter, I have come to the idea of adopting splendor rather than gloom. I don’t say that I am going to pick up gay anecdotes out of existence, but my job now is to do the tragic in a splendid way.

Rico Lebrun, 1959-60 (204:15)

After Christ was taken down and the Golgotha scaffold scrubbed with whitewash, someone discovered that without the irrelevant trifle of blood and pain the Cross made a composition of “significant horizontals and verticals.” This meant nothing at all to Mary the Mother. Her sight had been made unsophisticated by experience.

To me the repetition of the symbol of the Crucifixion comes as a necessary act; I can thus make its daily immanence real and present. We try to ignore this presence; we say that it is a fable of times past. Meanwhile thousands are being destroyed by malice and terror every day. Being Christian by birth and choice, I still have a hundred versions of the Calvary to do, in the shape of prayer, in all forms and colors; from the imperceptible white of first agony to the ultimate hues which transfigured the gibbet.

Rico Lebrun, 1961

20. CRUCIFIXION, 1958 or 1959
Ink and colored crayon on paper
12¹/₄ X 17¹/₂ (32 X 45)
Constance Lebrun Crown

21. CRUCIFIXION (after GRÜNEWALD), 1961
Lithograph on wove paper
13¹/₂ X 21¹/₂ (34 X 55)
Signed in pencil
Syracuse University Art Collections (SU 60.152)

22. BLACK GOLGOTHA, 1957
Oil on canvas
93¹/₂ X 77 (238 X 196)
Signed and dated
Estate of Rico Lebrun, Kennedy Galleries, New York City

23. CRUCIFIXION (BLACK AND GOLD GOLGOTHA), 1963
Oil on canvas
93 X 8¹/₂ (236 X 207)
Estate of Rico Lebrun, Kennedy Galleries, New York City
Before painting the several versions of the Pit, Buchenwald Cart, and other related themes, I did many precise and lucid drawings using the photographic documentation available on the subject as a test to maintain and amplify if possible the authenticity of brute fact. Yet after having gone through days of absorbed and almost hallucinatory recording of these awesome fragments, I remember wanting to brush the whole thing away from me: the draftsman made their sight unbearable to me—a just price to pay. Afterward, the mind drifted for a while and then remembered something that was left at its bottom, remembered the upheaval of the spent furnace with fragments, islands here and there, of what had been the living body. Going to work again, I painted several versions, the truest being the ones in which I could not name the islands—pelvis, skull, whatever they had been. So the changes were part of the search to find at which degree the commemoration would read true. The technique had to be that which answered these requirements precisely; and, in a total revulsion against craft and skill, I found that I wanted to speak out in a single shout.

Rico Lebrun, 1961
And this apparent fleetingness and unreali-
ty of the locality of the idea was most pro-
bably one reason for the Spaniards calling
them the Encantadas, or Enchanted Group. .
Nor would the appellation, enchanted,
seem misplaced in still another sense. For
concerning the peculiar reptile inhabitant of
these isles—whose presence gives the
group its second Spanish name,
and this apparent fleetingness and unreali-
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Nor would the appellation, enchanted,
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concerning the peculiar reptile inhabitant of
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Canto XIII • Circle Seven, Round Two

Bolgia of the suicides; they are changed into trees and bushes.

Puzzled, I raised my hand a bit and slowly broke off a branch from an enormous thorn: and the great trunk of it cried: "Why do you break me?"

And after blood had darkened all the bowl of the wound, it cried again: "Why do you tear me? Is there no pity left in any soul? Men we were, and now we are changed to sticks; well might your hand have been more merciful were we no more than souls of lice and ticks."

Canto XXVIII • Circle Eight

Bolgia of the sowers of discord; sowers of schism abroad while they yet lived; therefore they now go split.

Who could describe, even in words set free of metric and rhyme and a thousand times retold, the blood and sounds that now were shown to me! At grief so deep the tongue must sag in hate, the language of our sense and memory lacks the vocabulary of such pain.

If I am, more than ever it don’t say forever, involved with dark images, this is because the island forms, the blocks of objects and human hands when seen at night, all the monolith semblance a form needs without the chatter of details: in other words, they are clearer to me as forms and move drama all in one. Darkness is to me not meant to shroud but to eliminate the unnecessary, to clarify the ghost of shapes before sunshine floods them. Often I walk to work so early in the morning that garbage pails, cars, gas pumps, trees, have a look of breathless beings surprised on a terrain of solemn truce before the day comes. And when I get to the studio I sit for a while in the dark watching the animal-furniture, the easel-giraffe, the potamus-couch, emerge from the lagoon of the floor. From this I had the idea of drawings for the flood; not from shedding tears over Noah’s ordeal, but from being thankful to the Lord for this available Genesis in which mass, if I can watch it without flinching, slowly gets mobilized within itself, outpatient and griseous. Also, thus seen, forms are condensed to basic things which can become body, triangle, line, rock or circle by the slightest turn of the mind: a lesson against indiscriminate seeing. So then, having greeted the day with this reduced version of the Creation, I have the simple spunk of switching on the glaring mistake of the electric bulb, and of starting to draw my lesson on paper.

Rico Lebrun, February 1963
The greatest news we have to send is that Rico, nothing daunted by the problems of painting and drawing has turned his whole being into sculpture. He adores it and it is the most natural and easy medium he has ever worked in. I suppose much of the later is due to the years of drawing he has put in. He has so far worked in wax and has had three things cast in bronze. Works on the wax with heat and the damned thing is really alive. He actually "models" with the flame, never does any additive business. The wax is poured in thin sheets which he fashions shell-like into an approximation of what he wants, then completes the gesture with a torch. It is the most satisfying thing he has ever tackled.

Constance Lebrun Crown, 1962

I got to the stage where even the most developed drawing was not enough. I would push into the paper, scrape down, add sections of collage—but it did not seem to be responding to a new need I had. It is only very recently that I put in some serious sessions in sculpture. It has all taken place very recently, and I am very anxious to overcome the initial technical impediments which are not many and not of a very complex nature so as to be able to get to the point where I ask sculpture to show me some new possibilities, a new part of myself which I had never paid much attention to. Unless it does that, I am not really interested in translating some already existing drawings into bronze. What for? The best part of this whole game is after all the amount of vigor you bring in tackling your whole self and bringing it down to a thumping fall if that is in the cards. Getting up again is usually a wonderful excuse to start things all over as if nothing bad happened before, not even your own "reputation," not even your own "importance."

Rico Lebrun, 1963
RICO LEBRUN CHRONOLOGY

10 Dec 1900 Rico Lebrun, christened Federico, was born in Naples. Parents Italian-born, his father Edoardo of French descent, his mother Assunta Carione, Spanish by heritage.

1910-1917 Attended the National Technical School until 1914; the National Technical Institute until 1917.

1917-1922 Last year of World War I, served in the Italian army; 1918-1920, in the navy; also studied at the Industrial Institute in the daytime and attended free drawing classes at the Naples Academy of Fine Arts at night. Worked with local fresco painters Cambi and Luca Albino.

1922-1924 Designer for stained-glass factory in Naples. February 1924 was sent to newly established branch in Springfield, Illinois, as foreman of the factory and instructor in stained-glass technique.


1931-1933 Second Italian sojourn; studied fresco painting with Silvio Calimberti in Rome; friendship with fellow student, Lewis Rubenstein. Traveled to Italy and to Spain; copied Signorelli's Last Judgment frescoes especially The Damned, 1502-04 in Orvieto Cathedral. Returned to New York in June 1933; studio on Banks Street. Joined Rubenstein at Harvard University to work on mural at Fogg Art Museum, later walled over.

1934-1935 Received a Guggenheim Fellowship (1935-36) for a mural project. Taught classes in life drawing, mural composition, and fresco painting at the Art Students League of New York.


1938-1939 Channing Peake and family attracted Lebrun to California; he settled in Santa Barbara, taught at Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles, 1939.

1940-1941 Married Elaine Leonard (divorced from painter Jon Corbino). Taught animation at Walt Disney Studios (for Bambi film). In February 1940, Donald Bear, director of newly established art museum, organized Lebrun's first solo exhibition at Faulkner Memorial Art Gallery, Santa Barbara; show traveled to San Diego and San Francisco (Dec - 1940).


1946 His wife Elaine died; Lebrun stayed with Channing Peake and family at horse ranch in Santa Ynez Valley above Santa Barbara; Farm Implements series (1947).


1951 Triptych shown at Museum of Modern Art (Mar); Crucifixion exhibition (reduced in number) in Santa Barbara (July), and San Francisco (Nov). Appointed director, The Jepson Art Institute.

1952 Served on jury of Pittsburgh International at Carnegie Institute; received Award of Merit, American Academy of Arts and Letters for "outstanding achievement in the past five years in painting." November 1952 to Mexico: some teaching at Instituto Allende, San Miguel de Allende; worked with collage (much destroyed before returning home).


1954-1957 In May, returned to Los Angeles from Mexico: large studio at San Vicente Boulevard shared with younger artists and students. Began work on Buchenwald series in 1955. Twice taught sum- mer classes at the University of California, Los Angeles; also at Yale-Norfolk Summer School.
1958-1959 Visiting Professor of Art at Yale University. Friendship with Leonard Baskin; trip to Northampton for Encantadas (early summer 1959).


1961 Brief trip to Japan. Series of drawings illustrating Dante's Inferno. In the fall, participated in Tamarind Lithographic Workshop program. Bertholt Brecht's Workshop program, Bertholt Brecht's Threepenny Novel, participated in Tamarind Lithographic Workshop program, Bertholt Brecht's Threepenny Novel, after Grunewald in February, trip to Mexico. Received Lebrun Crown from the artist's extensive writings; revisions dated approximately 1959-60 (in preparation for the 1961 book) arranged by topics and paginated (e.g., 204:15). From the David Lebrun collection, and selections donated to the George Arents Research Library for Special Collections, Syracuse University; also in the Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.


1964 On 9 May, Rico Lebrun died of cancer at his new home in Malibu.

Lebrun Statements Reproduced in the Catalogue


Lebrun 1958. Captions for exhibition at Yale University, reprinted in exhibition catalogue of Boston University Art Gallery (Apr 1959); partly reprinted also in Selz, New Images of Man, and Rodman, The Insiders.

Lebrun 1959-60. Manuscript typed and compiled by Constance Lebrun Crown from the artist's extensive writings; revisions dated approximately 1959-60 (in preparation for the 1961 book) arranged by topics and paginated (e.g., 204:15). From the David Lebrun collection, and selections donated to the George Arents Research Library for Special Collections, Syracuse University; also in the Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.


Lebrun 1962. February 1963. Foreword (dated) to exhibition catalogue, Rico Lebrun: Paintings and Drawings of the Crucifixion, Los Angeles County Museum, 1950. Preface by W. R. Valentiner. Although the illustrated catalogue lists 206 items, the museum space could only hold 116 paintings and drawings, according to Mrs. Constance Lebrun Crown's records: some additional works were shown concurrently at the Jepson Art Institute.


Lebrun, Rico. Rico Lebrun: Paintings and Drawings of the Crucifixion. Los Angeles County Museum, 1950. Statement by Lebrun, prefatory by W. R. Valentiner. Although the illustrated catalogue lists 206 items, the museum space could only hold 116 paintings and drawings, according to Mrs. Constance Lebrun Crown's records: some additional works were shown concurrently at the Jepson Art Institute.

Art and Artists. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1956, pp. 68-88. Lebrun was instrumental in having this collection of artists' statements published; includes his Mexican journal.


SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY


"Lebrun Paints a Picture," Art News, December 1958, pp. 30-39, 39. Important article, with quotations from Lebrun; great photographs by William Reagh (e.g., frontispiece).


Bouchage, Luc. "Lebrun's Crucifixion," Harper's Bazaar, April 1949, pp. 142-43; and color illustrations.


Lebrun was instrumental in having this collection of artists' statements published; includes his Mexican journal.

Rico Lebrun: Pavilion Gallery, Newport Beach, CA, spring 1964. Henry J. Seldis, and "Thoughts on Lebrun" by Frederick Wight; exhibition traveled to Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center and Portland Museum of Art, Oregon. Good emphasis on late work.


Rico Lebrun: Late Works. Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1971. Excellent reproductions of the sculpture, with comments by George Goyer about their creation (n.p.).


See some additional items in the end notes.

Extensive (though not complete) bibliography in Lebrun 1987 catalogue.