



For Immediate Release

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## **FIRST U.S. EXHIBITION IN HALF A CENTURY OF GERMAINE RICHIER TO GO ON VIEW IN NEW YORK CITY**

### ***Germaine Richier***

February 27 – April 12, 2014  
Opening Reception: Thursday, February 27, 6-8pm  
Dominique Lévy / Galerie Perrotin  
909 Madison Avenue  
New York City

NEW YORK, NY... Beginning February 27, 2014, Dominique Lévy and Galerie Perrotin will jointly present the first American exhibition in half a century devoted to the work of seminal postwar French artist Germaine Richier (1902 – 1959).

On view in the landmark building at 909 Madison Avenue where both galleries reside, ***Germaine Richier*** will present more than forty important sculptures ranging from early torsos and figures, to startling hybrids of humans crossed with bats, toads, spiders, and vegetal organisms, that brought the artist international recognition before her untimely death at the age of 57. The exhibition traces the evolution of a defiantly independent vision and the artistic trajectory of a woman whose life was imprinted indelibly by two World Wars; who began her career in the studio of Antoine Bourdelle; and who went on to break convention and leave a vivid mark on the history of Modern art.

The exhibition complements Richier's sculptures with a selection of photographs by her contemporary Brassai, who documented the artist's studio and captured the defying power of her work. Brassai's portraits of Richier convey the unique magical chaos of her environment. As depicted in these photographs, Richier surrounded herself with a wild jumble of sculptures spanning different periods of her output -- a veritable sculptural forest that has inspired the installation design for ***Germaine Richier*** in New York. Visitors to the exhibition will discover there a deliberately dense, non-chronological,

and eccentric installation, where sculptures and photographs overflow into the stairwells and draw visitors on a journey into the artist's world.

**Germaine Richier** will remain on view through April 12<sup>th</sup> on Manhattan's Upper East Side, in the same neighborhood where the artist's first American solo exhibition was presented to broad critical acclaim in 1957 at the legendary Martha Jackson Gallery. The exhibition coincides with a major retrospective of Richier's work currently on view at the Kunstmuseum Bern in Switzerland, as well as *Giacometti, Marini, Richier: The Tortured Figure* at Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts of Lausanne in Switzerland.

**Germaine Richier** has been organized with the support of the artist's family. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, one of the first scholarly studies of the artist's work ever published in the United States. Researched and edited by Jennifer Buonocore and Clara Touboul, with support from Daphné Valroff, the book will feature original essays by Sarah Wilson and Anna Swinbourne. It also will reproduce a 1953 text by André Pieyre de Mandiargues, never before translated in English, as well as important archival documents from the Germaine Richier Estate.

In addition to works coming from the Germaine Richier Estate, loans from American and European private collections will contribute to an in-depth examination of Richier's oeuvre, which defies easy classification. **Germaine Richier** will explore the daring ways in which Richier's art bridges the tradition of classical figurative sculpture with an idiosyncratic visual language born of an anguished, searching, and, ultimately, spiritual post-World War psyche.

## **The Exhibition**

**Germaine Richier** will reintroduce American audiences to one of the first female sculptors ever to receive critical acclaim within her lifetime – an artist who exhibited at five consecutive Venice Biennales beginning in 1948, was featured at the first São Paulo Biennale in 1951, and was avidly collected in Europe and the United States.

Born in 1902 in Grans, France, Germaine Richier moved to Paris in 1926 and became a student in the studio of Antoine Bourdelle, with whom she worked until his death in 1929. Like Antoine Bourdelle, Auguste Rodin, and Alberto Giacometti (who also studied in Bourdelle's studio), Richier explored the tradition of bronze figurative sculpture but charted a new territory beyond that tradition. Inspired by the creatures she encountered in the stories of the Provence region where the artist grew up, and deeply influenced by her first visit to the ruins of Pompeii in 1935, Richier's work mixes qualities of both the classical and the mythical. She was enraptured by the natural

world. The idea of reverse evolution – the devolution of the human mammal to bat, to bird, and to insect – was a powerful metaphor not only for nature but for the regression of civilization in the aftermath of the atrocities of the war years.

In ***Germaine Richier***, the artist's career is traced by major works of each period. Among early sculptures on view are the highly classical standing figures of *Loretto* (1934) and *Nu ou La Grosse* (1939), darkly patinated bronzes that express the prerogatives of classicism – balance and harmony – and reflect the influence of Richier's mentors. As the exhibition moves into the 1940s, visitors will find Richier coming more fully into her own, expressing two imperatives that will shape her work until her death – the challenge of imbuing static materials with movement, and the wildness of nature experienced in her Provençal childhood. Modest in scale but astonishingly alive, *La Mante, moyenne* (1946) is neither mantis nor man, crouched and gesturing. The figure of *La Forêt* (1946) is a perfect illustration of Richier's link to her roots: In a letter to her mother that year, Richier asked her family to send to Paris a bundle of specific branches for her to use instead of wires in the process of making this sculpture.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Richier's work manifests both a heightened mysticism and technical adventurousness. In a series of works inspired by Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, the artist's figures become more expressionistic and elongated, in stances slightly askew, with patinas of a wider color range. Works such as *Don Quichotte à la lance* (1949) and *Don Quichotte* (1950-51) suggest a new phase.

In the 1950s, the artist's figures underwent a remarkable transformation as she experimented with hybrids and untried geometries, even while remaining connected to her own training. *La Tauromachie* (1953) depicts a figure familiar to the bullrings of the Camargue region in the South of France. In this sculpture Richier skillfully shifts the horseman's staff to one side, throwing off symmetry and imbuing the tableaux with a unique vitality. During the first half of the 50s, Richier created many sculptures depicting seated women; on view in the exhibition, *L'Eau* (1953-54) is the last of a series in which female forms are completely human. The type of Ur-Woman depicted in this sculpture subsequently gives way to the artist's signature human-insect hybrids, astonishing figures in which Richier's dual interests in nature and classicism, instinct and technique, would merge powerfully. *La Sauterelle, grande* (1955-1956) is a prime example from this period.

The latest work on view in ***Germaine Richier*** is the large five-sculpture grouping *l'Echiquier, grand* (1959), which marks the apogee of the artist's career. Coursing through the exhibition is vivid evidence of Richier's rich variety of patinas, which range from dark tones to gold finishes, rendering animated effects. Her unconventional use of

color – perhaps one of the most extraordinary and unexpected aspects of Germaine Richier’s work – is exemplified in the late painted bronze *Le Couple peint* (1959).

The work of Germaine Richier is represented in numerous public collections including the Tate Gallery, London, UK; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, US; Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, France; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark; Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern, Switzerland; and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, Venice, Italy.

**Germaine Richier** will be on view to the public at 909 Madison Avenue at East 73<sup>rd</sup> Street, from Tuesday through Saturday from 10 AM until 6 PM, and by appointment.

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