ALMINE RECH

Le Corbusier
Nomadic Murals

Sep 14 — Oct 22, 2022 | New York, Upper East Side

Almine Rech New York is pleased to present *Nomadic Murals* an exhibition of tapestries by Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, known as Le Corbusier. This is the first time the gallery has shown works by Le Corbusier. The exhibition will be on view from September 14 to October 22, 2022.

For sixty years, Le Corbusier used a wide variety of media to explore the themes and forms of his art, ranging from drawing to urbanism and including painting, architecture, and sculpture. He first discovered tapestry in 1936, in response to a request from Marie Cuttoli, who was then commissioning artworks woven in a factory in Aubusson from modern painters. However, it was twelve years later that he expressed his interest in producing woven artworks based on his drawings and found his way to this city in central France, where a true renaissance of tapestry had begun, at the initiative of Jean Lurçat and Jean Picart Le Doux.

His interest in this art form serves as a response to the challenge posed to architects by Fernand Léger, who had blamed them for "radically imposing" their "smooth" and "new" surfaces. Le Corbusier came to believe that "by its texture, its material, by the reality of its production," tapestry "brings its own warmth to an interior," as he wrote in 1962 to Pierre Baudouin, a young professor at the art school in Aubusson. Starting in 1948, Baudouin allowed him to transpose some of his Purist compositions of the 1920s and to echo the assemblages of objects "with poetic reaction" that had followed.

This dialogue with the faithful "wool artist" Baudouin continued until the architect's death in 1965. Gradually, the themes of his cartoons expanded, for instance with the introduction of the female figures who populated his drawings and paintings. For Le Corbusier, the artworks produced at Aubusson were by no means merely intended to decorate elite residences. Defining them with the neologism Muralnomad, surely inspired by his travels in North Africa, he perceived them as mobile components of modern dwellings, which can be "taken down from the wall, rolled up, put under your arm whenever you like, and hung up elsewhere."

Revealingly, Le Corbusier's work on the cartoons intended for Baudouin materializes the unity of his artistic thought. In contrast to his previous attitude during the Purist period, when his paintings had determined the plans of his houses, he affirmed in a letter to Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer that he had "found in tapestry an opening capable of receiving part of [his] mural work where [his] vocation as a painter finds its architectonic sustenance in full awareness."

From the explorations he undertook for Marie Cuttoli to his great postwar compositions, this exhibition presents an exceptional set of artworks, whether intimate sketches or vast tapestries, tracing the path of Le Corbusier's observations and imagination from the "typical objects" of his first still lifes to the female bodies that always inspired him, and whose forms he combined with those of musical instruments and rigging. The largest tapestry that he ever produced – created for the High Court of Chandigarh, the Indian capital that he designed in 1951 – is evoked by a cartoon depicting stylized scales, while the "Open Hand" Monument in the center of the city appears in his Still Life of 1965.

The variety of artistic techniques used by Le Corbusier to design the cartoons of some twenty-six tapestries that Baudouin produced can be seen in the artworks brought together by the gallery, from colored pencil to pastel, oil, and papier collé. In this way, the exhibition reveals all the resources of an architect who had told Guggenheim Museum director James Johnson Sweeney in 1957: "I am a painter, very seriously." Exploring all the processes used on paper, the exhibition expresses the vividness of his imagination by unveiling the originality and strength of his woven artworks within the wider context of postwar tapestry.

— Jean-Louis Cohen, architectural historian and curator of Le Corbusier: An Atlas of Modern Landscapes at MoMA (2013).