

OPERA GALLERY



Bernard Buffet, *Place des Vosges*, 1960, Oil on canvas, 81 x 130 cm | 31.9 x 51.2 in

LONDON

Bernard Buffet La France de Bernard Buffet

3 OCTOBER - 2 NOVEMBER, 2025

July 2025—Opera Gallery in London is pleased to present ‘La France de Bernard Buffet’, **the largest solo exhibition dedicated to the renowned French figurative painter Bernard Buffet (1928-1999) in London in over 50 years.** Timed to Frieze week, the exhibition will feature more than 20 rarely seen paintings created between 1951-1998. It explores the artist’s relationship with his native France and will run from **3 October - 2 November 2025.**

During the 1950s Bernard Buffet enjoyed worldwide popularity for his expressive figuration, capturing French sensibility post-war and becoming a leading artist of his time. By the end of this decade, notoriety affected his artistic appeal with critics. In the context of his dramatic relationship to French society the exhibition follows the artist’s deep relationship to the places and customs of his native France. Presented in three sections: **Landscapes, Cityscapes** and **Seascapes**, the exhibition will provide a visual compendium of Buffet’s unique relationship with France and his lifelong love of his mother country.

“Buffet’s oeuvre is still relevant today,” said the exhibition’s co-curator, **Nicholas Foulkes**—an esteemed expert on both Bernard Buffet and luxury, who has been a journalist for nearly 40 years and authored the 2016 biography *Bernard Buffet: The Invention of the Modern Mega-Artist*. He added, “Few people can see beyond Bernard Buffet’s signature. I very much hope that, with this comprehensive exhibition showcasing a variety of his works depicting his beloved France, a wider public will come to appreciate the diversity and technical brilliance of an artist who remains controversial to this day.”

Imbued with a sense of existentialism and stark realism, the exhibition pays homage to the artist’s interpretation of both the physical and emotional landscape of post-war France. Buffet once remarked of his paintings, “I do not try to reproduce the world, but to recreate it in a manner that is more true to my own.” Buffet’s view of France was significantly shaped by the experience of living through the Second World War during his formative years in Paris, a perspective that would go on to inform the post-war existentialism that his work came to be emblematic of, alongside his rise and fall with the French elites.

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(L-R) *La Baume, Les iris, la maison, les genêts*, 1997 oil on canvas, 130 x 81 cm | 51.2 x 31.9 in; *Ile de Port-Cros*, 1953, Oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm | 25.6 x 31.9 in

The cosmopolitan backdrop of the Paris provided endless inspiration, and the significance of the city's influence is reflected in his works. In *Place des Vosges* (1960), Buffet captures one of the oldest squares in Paris - and the location where he began his formal art career - with architectural rigidity and his sharp linear style. In this painting he both celebrates and critiques the city's imposing and often isolating environment. Buffet also encountered a diverse array of figures and characters as he moved among Parisian society during his relationship with Pierre Bergé.

Although Buffet was born in Paris, he often found refuge and inspiration by the sea. *Ile de Port-Cros* (1953) depicts a view of the sea from the small island of Port-Cros off the southern coast of France, rendered in a muted a colour palette dominated shades of blue and grey.

Throughout his life, he owned many impressive estates across France. His last home, the sprawling Domaine de la Baume, situated near the Provençal village of Tourtour, inspired some of his celebrated late career work, including the painting *La Baume, Les iris, la maison, les genêts* (1997). It was here that Buffet painted his final works before his death in 1999.

"We invite audiences to rediscover Buffet through the lens of France—a country that was both his muse and mirror. This enduring theme allows us to explore how his art evolved alongside shifting notions of national identity, cultural symbolism, and the landscapes that defined his vision." said Giulia Lecchini, Deputy Director of Opera Gallery in London.

'La France de Bernard Buffet' traces Buffet's enduring artistic dialogue with his mother country and its landscapes, its traditions, and its cultural symbols that continues to resonate today.

About Bernard Buffet

Bernard Buffet was a French Expressionist painter born in 1928 in Paris. In 1943 at the age of 15, he was admitted into the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, and by 1947 he had his first solo show in Paris. In 1948, at age 20, was awarded the Prix de la Critique. He died in 1999 in Tourtour, France at the age of 71.

Buffet developed over the years a distinctive style with an overall mood of loneliness and despair. His work revolved around the culture of his Post-War France: death, sexuality, popular culture and politics.

During his lifetime, he garnered widespread popularity and acclaim, including dozens of international exhibitions and honors. Today, his work can be found in several public collections including the Centre Georges Pompidou, The National Museum of Modern Art in Paris, the National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo, the Tate London and a museum in Japan is devoted to his work.

About Opera Gallery

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Founded in Singapore in 1994, Opera Gallery has forged a network of galleries worldwide with locations in London, Paris, New York, Geneva, Madrid and Dubai, establishing itself as one of the leading forces within the international art market.

Headed by Gilles Dyan, Chairman and Founder, Opera Gallery specialises in Modern, Post-War, and Contemporary art. In addition, the gallery represents international emerging artists such as Andy Denzler, Pieter Obels and Gustavo Nazareno, alongside internationally recognised names such as Ron Arad, Manolo Valdés and Anselm Reyle.

For more than 30 years, Opera Gallery's mission has been to showcase the dynamic, innovative, and diverse expressions of Modern and Contemporary art through its ambitious yearly exhibition programming and collaborations with private collections and leading public institutions. Opera Gallery in London is led by Giulia Lecchini.

Press Contact

Madeleine Mann | madeleinem@suttoncomms.com

Katherine McMahon | katherine@operagallery.com

Opera Gallery London

65-66 New Bond Street

London W1S 1RR

london@operagallery.com

T +44 (0)207 491 2999

Monday-Saturday: 10 am - 6:30 pm

Sunday: 12pm - 5pm

operagallery.com