The Trinity College Dublin Art Collections

Artist: Pierre Jacob Tal-Coat
Title: Galerie Maeght, Paris 1962
Medium: lithograph poster

b. 1905, Clohars-Carnoët, France d. 1985, Saint-Pierre de Bailleul

Pierre Jacob Tal-Coat was a French painter, print-maker and sculptor. Tal-Coat's birth name was Pierre Louis Jacob. He was born in Brittany, a fisherman's son, and came to Paris in 1924. He chose the surname Tal-Coat (Breton for "Wood Face") to avoid being confused with the artist and poet Max Jacob. He was self-taught as an artist, having worked as a porcelain painter in the faience factory at Quimper. In 1925 he went to Paris to do his military service, and while there was drawn into a series of artistic circles who admired the works of Picasso, Matisse and Cezanne.

In 1947 Tal-Coat abruptly changed his style under the influence of traditional Chinese paintings, notably landscapes of the Song period (960–1279). He began to express his experience of landscape by means of a few broad strokes against pale and delicate backgrounds. His observation of natural phenomena, foam on a rock or rain over a mountain, was executed in an abstract manner in an effort to express the essence of nature in an emotional sense, rather than by purely descriptive means.

Tal-Coat quickly became one of the most important figures in the post-war School of Paris. One of the founders in the mid-forties of Tachisme, a lyrical abstract movement that was the French version of Abstract Expressionism, his paintings were acclaimed and admired by fellow artists. He exhibited regularly in France and abroad during his life-time and received the Légion d'honneur in 1960. However, because of his need to commune with nature and to escape from modern life he remained a recluse in the village of Saint-Pierre de Bailleul, Eure, until his death.

The information in this article has been taken from Grove Dictionary of Art online and David Scott, The Modern Art Collection Trinity College Dublin, (Trinity College Dublin Press, 1989).

This information has been compiled by Art Collections assistants, interns, and volunteers
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