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Robert Fishko, *Director*

FERNAND LÉGER

(1881-1955)

Étude pour la Grande Tour: Constructeurs, 1949

gouache, ink, oil, and graphite on paper

32 x 22 inches / 81.3 x 55.9 cm

initialed and dated lower right, "FL 49"

A photo certificate of authenticity issued by
Mme. Irus Hansma accompanies this work.



Provenance

The Artist

Galerie Louise Leiris, Paris

Andre Lefèvre, Paris

[Hotel Drouot, Paris, November 24, 1967, No. 27]

Galerie Berggruen, Geneva

Michelle Rosenfeld Gallery, New York

Private Collection, New Jersey

Arnold Herstand & Co., New York

Waddington Galleries, London (acquired from the above, September 1989)

Private Collection (acquired from the above, April 1993)

Vivian Horan, New York

Michelle Rosenfeld Gallery, New York

James Goodman Gallery, New York (acquired March 2000)

Collection of Jack and Leslie Kavanaugh, Los Angeles

Private Collection, New York (acquired 2011)

Forum Gallery, New York

Exhibited

La Collection André Lefèvre, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, March - April 1964, no. 174

Léger- America's Culture, Michelle Rosenfeld Gallery, New York, February 1 - March 3, 1998

References

P. De Francia, *Fernand Léger*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1983, (related paintings and works on paper reproduced on pgs. 169, 200, and 201.)

J. Cassou, & J. Leymarie, *Léger: Drawings and Gouaches*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, (see Chapter 11, "The Constructors: 1947-52", pgs. 179-186.)

Note

The quintessential painter of the machine age, Fernand Léger observed the effects of modern technology from the trenches as a soldier in the French army during World War I. Beginning in 1917, Léger began painting figures and objects characterized by tubular, machinelike forms as an expression of his belief that all of modern life was succumbing to the machine.

Though Léger's fascination with the modern world never diminished, his aesthetic evolved again in the early 1920s corresponding to his association with Purist artists Le Corbusier and Amédée Ozenfant, who advocated for an artistic fusion of classicism and modernity.

By the 1930s, Léger's interest in capturing the external world in an accessible visual language extended to his politics. Léger began teaching painting to the common worker in the mid-1930s as part of his activities as a leftist proponent of the French Popular Front and his work took on an increasingly figurative, populist style. In 1931 he visited the United States for the first time, propelling an exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, and The Art Institute of Chicago in 1935.

With the onset of World War II, Léger made plans to move to the United States where he lived from 1940 to 1945. Returning to France after the war, the industrial detritus and urban environment of New York continued to inform Léger's work. However, it was the devastation of World War II and the postwar process of reconstruction in France that became Léger's inspiration for a series of paintings depicting les constructeurs (construction workers), the universal symbol of *homo faber*, man the maker and builder.

Étude pour la Grande Tour, 1949 is Léger's paean to the working class in which the Artist exalts the value of proletarian labor in the story he tells of a group of electricians he witnessed working on steel girders and pylons, their bicycles standing alongside to take them home at the end of the day. Eager that his art should be accessible and seen by ordinary workers, Léger first exhibited the series of *les constructeurs* paintings in the canteen of the Renault car factory in Paris.

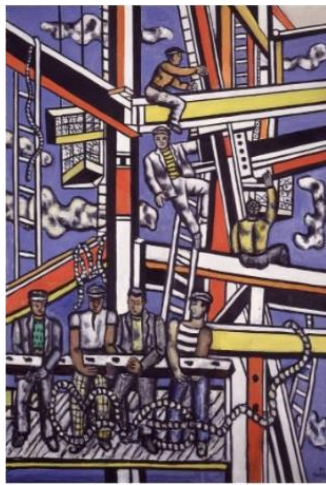
Étude pour la Grande Tour is directly related to Leger's major oil paintings in the collections of Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Caracas, Venezuela (*Étude Pour Les Constructeurs*); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (*Builders with Rope*); and Le Musée National Fernand Léger, Biot, France (*Les Constructeurs*).

This work was owned by André Amédée Nicolas Lefèvre, a successful financier and stockbroker who retired in 1927 at the age of forty-four in order to fully devote himself to collecting art and books. With a focus on Cubism, Lefèvre built an outstanding collection acquiring exceptional works by George Braque, Juan Gris, Fernand Léger, and Pablo Picasso. *Étude pour la Grande Tour* remained in his esteemed collection until he died in 1963.

This work will be included in Mme. Irus Hansma's forthcoming catalogue raisonné of the artist's works on paper, entitled, *Répertoire des Oeuvres sur Papier de Fernand Léger*.



Étude Pour Les Constructeurs, 1950
oil on canvas
63 3/4 x 51 1/4 inches
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo,
Caracas, no. 82.3



Builders with Rope (Les Constructeurs au Cordage), 1950
oil on canvas
63 1/2 x 44 7/8 inches
Solomon R. Guggenheim
Museum, New York, no. 77.2668



Les Constructeurs (Définitif), 1950
oil on canvas
118 x 89 3/4 inches
Le Musée National Fernand
Léger à Biot, France,
no. MNFL 94001