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## RAYMOND HUMBERT

D'UN ART, L'AUTRE

*Philippe Chabert*

*Contributions by Jean-Marie Lhôte and Jacqueline Humbert*

Drawing, painting, collecting: all activities Raymond Humbert found out at a young age that he could not do without. So he left his native Lorraine and moved to Paris. He enrolled first at the École des Arts Décoratifs and later at the École des Beaux Arts. In 1958, he was awarded the first Grand Prix de Rome, but the true Raymond Humbert is to be found in his later works. He eventually went to live with all his family in Laduz, in the Yonne region, in 1969 and made regular trips to the rocky coast of Porspoder in Brittany, where nature became his favourite theme. He continued to paint in virtual obscurity in this hidden corner of France until 1990. Painting in his garden in Laduz or on the windblown Porspoder shore was an essential release for him. Raymond Humbert gradually gave up the "intimacy" of his early studio work, where he used a subtle palette reminiscent of Vuillard, Bonnard, and Braque, to get close to nature, not with the aim of depicting it but to re-experience it in all seasonal aspects, combining vibrant lines with brilliant colours.

Raymond Humbert was also fascinated by objects. He need them around him and he would try to find out where the latest addition to his collection came from and gather all the information he could about it. In this way in the end he also developed a strong interest in the history of men. The tireless collector was relentless in creating his very own Musée des Arts Populaires in Laduz.

As a collector; he loved to accumulate objects and as a painter he enjoyed depicting them, perhaps responding to the urge to say everything while there was still time, to cover and fill large canvases in almost medium-inspired trance—whether it was Laduz in its organic vitality, its inspiring vigour, or Porspoder, a capricious marine environment pared down through a play of black and white to a rigorous stylization.

In his very last works, he turned to painting obsessively repetitive still lifes. A search for the unusual he captured in his glazed earthenware hare dishes—recumbent figures or sarcophagi, all explorations of form and content—culminating in these *vanitas*, not to say ossuaries—works fit for meditation.

**Philippe Chabert** is a head heritage curator. As the Director of the Musée d'art moderne in Troyes, he mounted two exhibitions of work by Raymond Humbert (in 1995 and 2000) and has written extensively on him.

**Jean-Marie Lhôte** is a former Director of the Maison de la culture, in Amiens. He is a project manager with François Mathey and head curator at the Musée des arts décoratifs, in Paris.

**Jacqueline Humbert** was the artist's life partner and collaborator in his work, as well as a close associate in all aspects of his life.