



Jean Langlois

1923–2014

Jean Langlois was born on March 8, 1923, in Nancy, in the Lorraine region of northeastern France. He came from a family shaped equally by military service and artistic culture: his father, a decorated veteran of Verdun who became a pioneer of French aviation and later a documentary filmmaker, and his mother, a graduate of the prestigious *École des Arts Décoratifs* in Paris. When the Second World War broke out in 1939, the sixteen-year-old Langlois left school to study at the Paris School of Applied Arts, before being posted with his father to Algiers, where he spent two formative years at the School of Fine Arts. It was there that he first encountered El Greco, whose painting struck him with the force of a revelation and set the trajectory of his artistic life.

Returning to Paris in 1941, Langlois enrolled in the decorative painting program at the School of Applied Arts, where he discovered Tintoretto, Goya, Daumier, Michelangelo, Matisse, and the Impressionists. Among his teachers was Jacques Zwoboda, whose own *Grande Chaumière* academy Langlois later joined as *massier*, responsible for recruiting models and managing students. At nineteen, he participated in the Liberation of Paris in August 1944, then joined the Allied forces and fought through Germany until the end of the war.

Back in Paris, Langlois began teaching at the *École Supérieure des Arts Modernes*, where he remained for forty-four years, from 1947 to 1991, devoting himself to the art of drawing and to fundamental research in aesthetics across successive generations of students. His position gave him abundant time to paint without commercial pressure, and he worked steadily in the solitude of his studio for more than six decades, building a body of work largely outside the institutional art world but deeply felt by those who encountered it.

His practice divides clearly into two periods. Until the late 1970s, he worked in a muted, tonal palette in oil on canvas. In the late 1970s he discovered acrylic and began working on medium-density fibreboard, a change that transformed both his palette and his subjects, opening into richer, more saturated compositions. Langlois's painting is resolutely figurative, rooted in the classical tradition. He worked on canvases of eight to ten feet, drawing his subjects from the objects surrounding him in the studio: a Japanese suit of armour, a wooden horse, a piece of fabric draped over a chair, an African mask, a ceramic jug, or the landscape visible through his window.

Langlois co-founded the Talma Group in 1965 with Jacques Landron and Jean Marnat, and exhibited at the Musée du Mans, the Salon d'Automne, the Salon des Artistes Français, the Salon des Indépendants, the Salon Comparaisons, the Salon Terre Latine, the Marcel Bernheim Gallery, and the Katia Granoff Gallery. From 1982 to 1992 his work was shown continuously at the Galerie Cardinal on the rue du Cardinal Lemoine in the 5th arrondissement. He was nominated for the Prix de la Critique in 1967 and awarded the Médaille d'Or des Artistes Français in 1968. A retrospective of his career was held at the Chaumont Abbey in 2008.

Jean Langlois died on January 15, 2014. He was ninety years old, and had been painting in his studio every day until three months before his death.