



Raymond Debiève

1931–2011

Raymond Debiève was born on May 29, 1931, in a working-class suburb of Maubeuge in northern France, near the Belgian border — one of twin boys whose early talent for drawing was recognized and encouraged by their father, Émile. The war years disrupted the family profoundly: Émile died, and Raymond and his twin brother Michel were separated. After the war, their mother Madeleine remarried, and their stepfather Lucien Henneuse gave the brothers their first box of paints, their easels, and their palettes. It was the beginning of a shared artistic life.

On the recommendation of the painter Charles Bétrémieux, both brothers enrolled at the École des Beaux-Arts in Valenciennes, where their work was quickly distinguished — Raymond and Michel winning successive prizes in the Concours d'Encouragement à l'Art. Raymond's range extended beyond painting from the start: he was also a gifted sculptor in metal, and would go on to work across ceramics and tapestry throughout his career.

His exhibition history began early. In 1947 he won first prize at the school exhibition, and in 1949 the curator of the Musée de Maubeuge acquired his work "St. Francis" directly from an exhibition there. In 1954 he designed sets for "The Firebird" at the Opéra de Lille, demonstrating an ambition that extended well beyond the canvas. Paris exhibitions followed at Galerie en Mai and Galerie du Siècle, and he showed in Valenciennes, Lille, Avignon, and Switzerland throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Debiève moved to Provence with his family in 1962, a relocation that would shape the color and light of his mature work. He established his final studio in Rochegude in 1983, and continued to exhibit across France and Switzerland until the end of his life. Along the way he developed lasting personal connections with major figures of the French art world: the sculptor César, the tapestry artist Jean Lurçat (whom he met at Galerie de la Demeure in Paris), the painter Édouard Pignon, and the celebrated art critic Jean Bouret.

Working across Expressionist and Post-Cubist modes, Debiève absorbed the influence of Picasso — particularly evident in his portraits of women — while forging a visual language unmistakably his own: richly colored, formally inventive, and rooted in the human figure. He died in Orange, Provence, in 2011. A retrospective was held in his native region in 2017. His work is listed in Davenport's and Bénézit's "Dictionnaire des peintres," and continues to attract growing international collector interest.