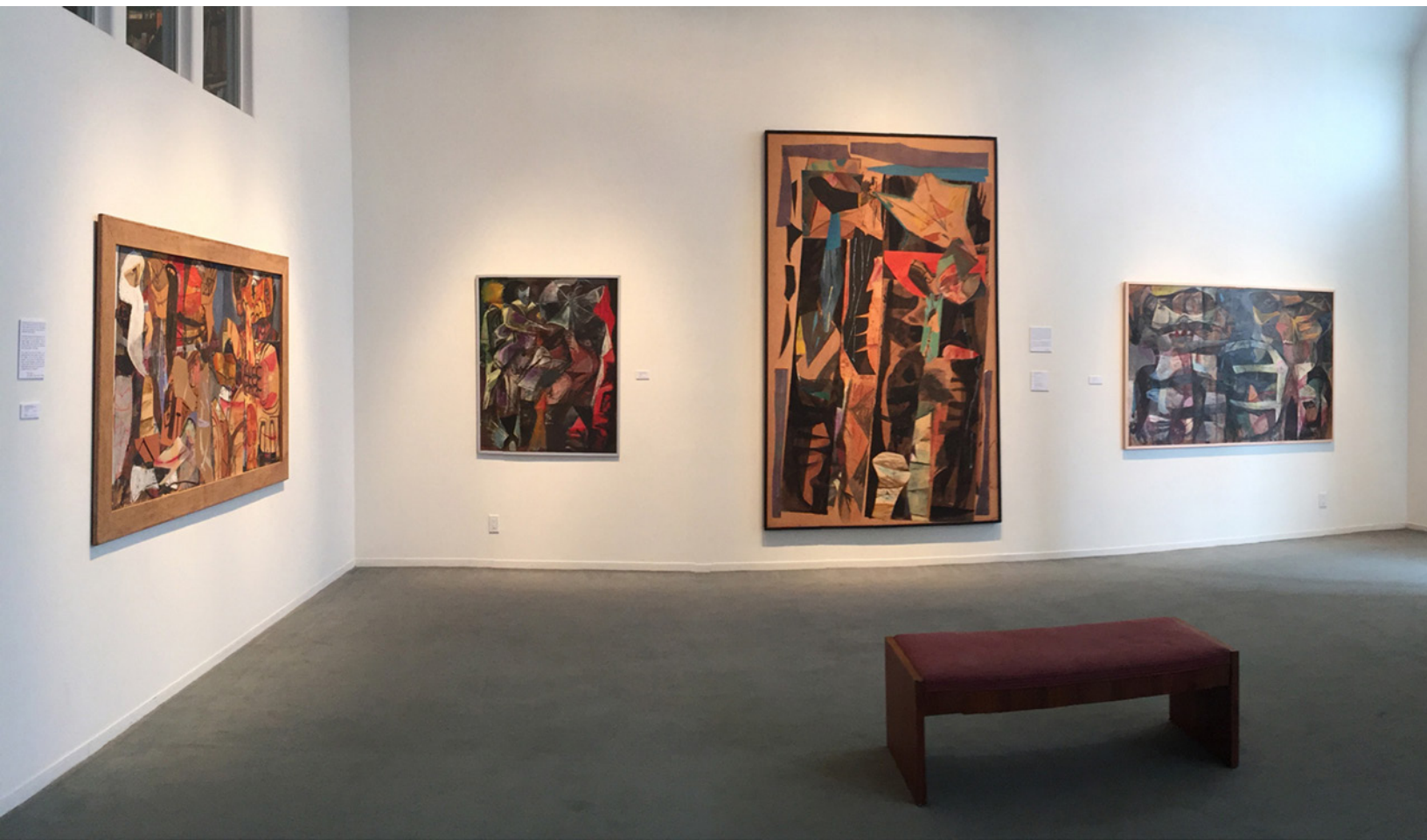


Rico Lebrun

RICO LEBRUN IN MEXICO

Major Paintings & Drawings of the 1950s





JACK RUTBERG FINE ARTS

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Rico Lebrun in His Studio, 1949, Photograph by Lou Jacobs, Jr.

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Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA

Exhibition:
Rico Lebrun in Mexico
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RICO LEBRUN IN MEXICO

Major Paintings & Drawings of the 1950s

As a participating gallery in the Getty's region-wide endeavor, **Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA**, Jack Rutberg Fine Arts presents this exhibition, **Rico Lebrun in Mexico**.

Rico Lebrun (b. Naples, Italy 1900 – d. Malibu, CA 1964) arrived in the U.S. in 1924. Settling in New York in his first years, Lebrun soon became a highly successful illustrator for such publications as *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *The New Yorker*. In 1934 Lebrun received his first of two successive Guggenheim Fellowships. Having already worked on several murals, he taught life drawing and fresco painting at the Art Students League in New York, before moving to Southern California in 1938.

Lebrun's impact in Los Angeles proved formidable as both an exhibiting artist and influential teacher at Chouinard Art Institute and the Jepson Art Institute, where he ultimately became its director in 1951. In the 1940s, Lebrun was among the very few artists of Los Angeles to be included in major museums in New York, including the Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum and the Metropolitan Museum, which purchased his painting *Bull Ring* in 1945. Lebrun's first solo exhibition was presented at the legendary Julian Levy Gallery in New York in 1944. He was exhibited so widely in major museums and galleries throughout the nation that he ranked among the most widely cited artists in America. In 1967, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art organized a major retrospective exhibition, which traveled to six other institutions including the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes in Mexico City and the National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington, D.C.

This exhibition, **Rico Lebrun in Mexico**, focuses attention on the period when Lebrun moved to San Miguel de Allende in 1952 to teach art at the Instituto Allende. There, a new generation of Mexican artists was introduced to and inspired by Lebrun, who distinguished himself not only as a painter and compelling draftsman, but also as a formidable muralist. His most widely known monumental scale works are the *Crucifixion* triptych, completed and exhibited at LACMA in 1950, now in the

permanent collection at Syracuse University, NY, and *Genesis*, a mural completed in 1960 at Pomona College.

In Mexico, Lebrun found a landscape and a people that resonated with the color, drama and passions he had grown up with in his native Naples. Capturing everyday life and scenes in the town and marketplace, Lebrun painted vivid tableaus combining strong, dynamic lines, semi-abstract figuration and dense compositions, often incorporating collaged elements. Included in the exhibition are selected drawings which exemplify Lebrun's expressive style and rarely seen monumental-scale paintings and collages, including *Mexican Street in the Rain*, shown in LACMA's 1967 touring Lebrun retrospective exhibition.

Rico Lebrun in Mexico offers a rare opportunity to view the works of one of the major American artists based in Los Angeles, and illustrates how Los Angeles' modern art history converges with the modern art history of Mexico. That history is further underscored by the Jack Rutberg Fine Arts' prior exhibitions, *Artists of Mexico*, *Hans Burkhardt in Mexico* and *Francisco Zúñiga: Sculpture & Drawings*, presented in concert with the Getty's endeavor, **Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA**.

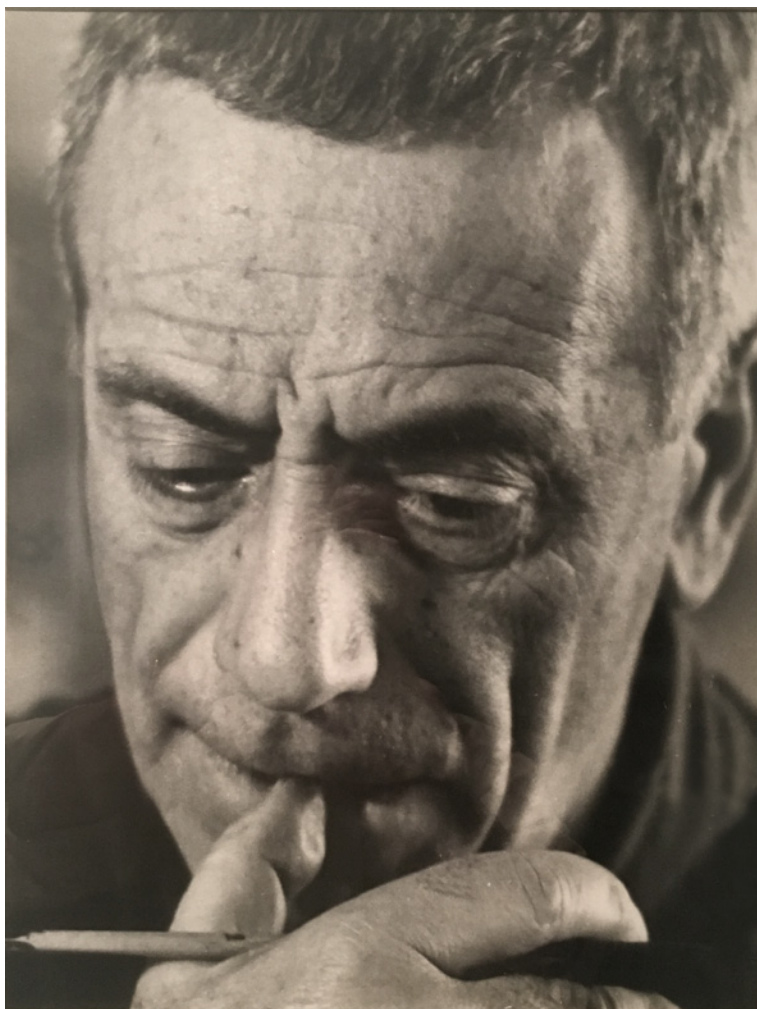
— Jack Rutberg, Spring 2018



Crucifixion, 1950, Duco on Upson Board, 16 x 26 feet, Syracuse University



Genesis, 1960, Mural, 29 x 25 feet, Pomona College



In Mexico, in a savage and grand way, I found again things I knew from the land of my birth. The same force seemed to shape the face of the landscape and humans alike. A fractured quality reveals the outer and inner surface of the land and beings at once. A quality of sustained and continuous anatomy related the loincloth wrapped around the pelvis to the swirl of torrents around boulders; the scapular ledge of the rock continued into the heaving rib cage of the sun-bronzed human standing against it. This quality of the revealed body repelled all easy ways of delineation. To render it meant to envelop it with one's understanding made into a line.

— Rico Lebrun

About Myself / Rico Lebrun: Drawing

MEXICAN GATE, 1953

Oil on Board

47 1/2 x 71 1/2 inches

Signed and Dated Lower Left

JRFA #11244

Exhibited:

Frank Perls Gallery, Beverly Hills, CA, 1955



MEXICAN MEAT STALL, 1954

Collage and Mixed Media on Board

96 x 47 inches

JRFA #11245

Exhibited:

Sao Paulo III Biennale of Modern Art, Brazil, 1955

Frank Perls Gallery, Beverly Hills, CA, 1955

Turning the Tide: Early Los Angeles Modernist, 1920-1956

Laguna Art Museum, CA, 1990

Travelled to:

Oakland Museum, CA, 1990

Marion Koogler McNay Art Institute (McNay Art Museum), San Antonio, TX, 1991

Nora Eccles Harrison Art Museum, Utah State University, Logan, UT, 1991

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, CA, 1991

Palm Springs Desert Museum, CA, 1991-92

Literature:

Turning the Tide: Early Los Angeles Modernist, 1920-1956

Laguna Art Museum, CA, 1990

Illustrated Plate, Page 82.

In the Meridian of the Heart: Selected Letters of Rico Lebrun

David Godine Press, 2000



EL MERCADO SAN MIGUEL, 1952

Ink on Paper

19 x 25 inches

Signed and Dated Lower Center

JRFA #11333



FRIED MEAT STAND, 1953

Ink Wash on Paper

19 x 24 inches

Signed and Dated Lower Right

Titled Lower Left

JRFA #11332



The richest time for painting was one of disasters, of bitter nuisances and big afflictions for almost everyone I knew. But the main issue was lack of rain. The crops were burning in the drought.

Bells had been clamoring for rain: then it came, violent, and with such malevolence that it changed fields into rivers and washed all the corn into the gullies. Vivid blue curtains sparked with lightning would advance across a field, carrying the terrible whispering death of crashing arrows of water to kill the credulous plants which had been shaking in anticipation and delight. Rain deluged the town too, as if someone had opened the gates for spite, some miser turned prodigal in a blind fury. Shutters, tents, market stalls and chairs, batlike skirts and flying tresses of scuttling women flapped and slid through the tall arches of solid water spouting from terraces on both sides of the streets. During pauses the walls were huge maps of mottled pomegranate, chocolate, ice blue and almond green, and the sidewalks of Queretaro stone looked like slabs of freshly cut bacon.

But that spell which carried the threat of penury for all but the very rich, did something else for me. Suddenly I became outraged at planned and planted labor so easily blown to pieces in my own work, and in a galloping, infuriated mood I squeezed the season of the pictures into a vital span so short that delay could no longer twist it out of existence. From buckets of color I painted one after another... huge, yielding and resisting, scattered and united, vertical and horizontal configurations in registers of the greatest beauty and docility, without tripping once... Soon the images of true execution festooned my walls, upright, gay, sorrowing, arrogant fields of my own, plowed and harvested all at once, and I felt great.

— Rico Lebrun
Mexican Journal

MEXICAN STREET IN THE RAIN, 1954

Painting and Collage on Board

110 x 65 inches

JRFA #11246

Exhibited:

Frank Perls Gallery, Beverly Hills, CA, 1955

Gallery of Art Interpretation: Recent Work by Rico Lebrun
Chicago Art Institute, IL, 1956

Rico Lebrun 1900-1964
Los Angeles County Museum, CA

Travelled to:

Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Mexico City
University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ
University of California, Berkeley, CA
Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA
Oklahoma Art Center, Oklahoma City, OK
National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C., 1967-69

Literature:

In the Meridian of the Heart: Selected Letters of Rico Lebrun
David Godine Press, 2000, Page 3



SAN MIGUEL FORMS, c. 1953

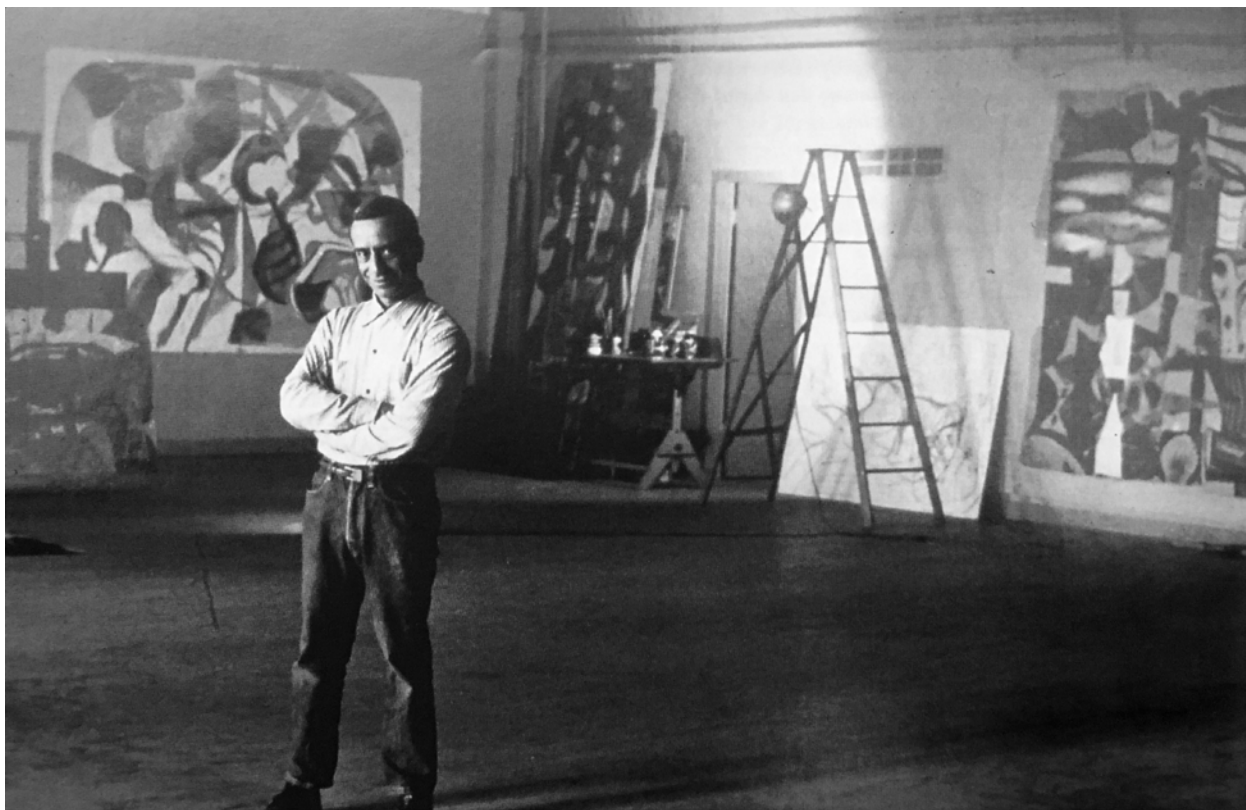
Ink on Paper

24 x 19 inches

Signed and Titled Lower Left

JRFA #11330





Rico Lebrun in His Studio, c. 1955

In looking over my work when I came back from Mexico, I could see that they made sense only as a dialogue carried on from day to day. This dialogue was about the remembrance of things and was not a transcription from the factual.

I found that collage was of the greatest help to me. As a medium I think it is a world unto itself. It permits changes – not just mendings – but true changes; it allows a pace of growth so rapid that its sum total retains the live face of the unexpected which I find necessary to any image.

Of one thing I was now sure: the subject is our duplicate and mirror; and I wanted to give shape to that allegiance for me and the spectator to remember. Also I wanted to remember that our image, even when disfigured by adversity, is grand in meaning; that no brutality will ever cancel that meaning; painting may increase it by changing what is disfigured into what is transfigured.

— Rico Lebrun

About Myself / Rico Lebrun: Drawing

MAGDALINE AND CENTURION, 1955

Painting and Collage on Board

42 x 78 inches

JRFA #11247

Exhibited:

Frank Perls Gallery, Beverly Hills, CA, c. 1950



WOMEN IN THE RAIN, 1956

Mixed Media Painting on Board

48 x 41 inches

JRFA #11243

Exhibited:

Rico Lebrun: Mexico/Spain

Mekler Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, 1985



LAS CUCARACHAS OR LOS SOLDADOS, c. 1955

Ink on Paper

19 x 25 inches

Signed Lower Left; Initialed Lower Right

JRFA #11331

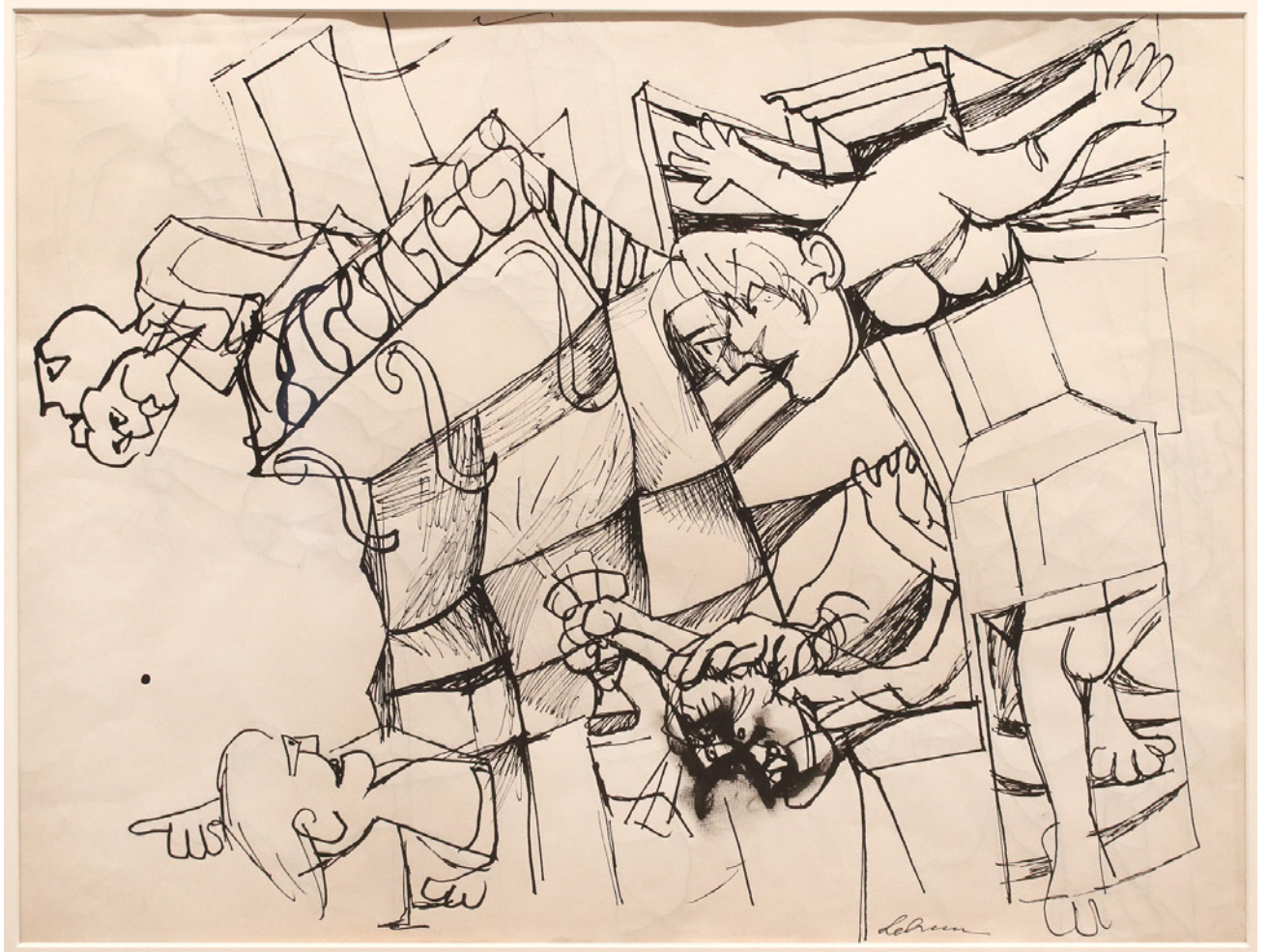
Literature:

In the Meridian of the Heart: Selected Letters of Rico Lebrun

David Godine Press, 2000



WOMAN WITH FLARES, c. 1952-54
Pen and Ink Wash on Paper
19 x 25 inches
Signed Lower Right
JRFA #11337



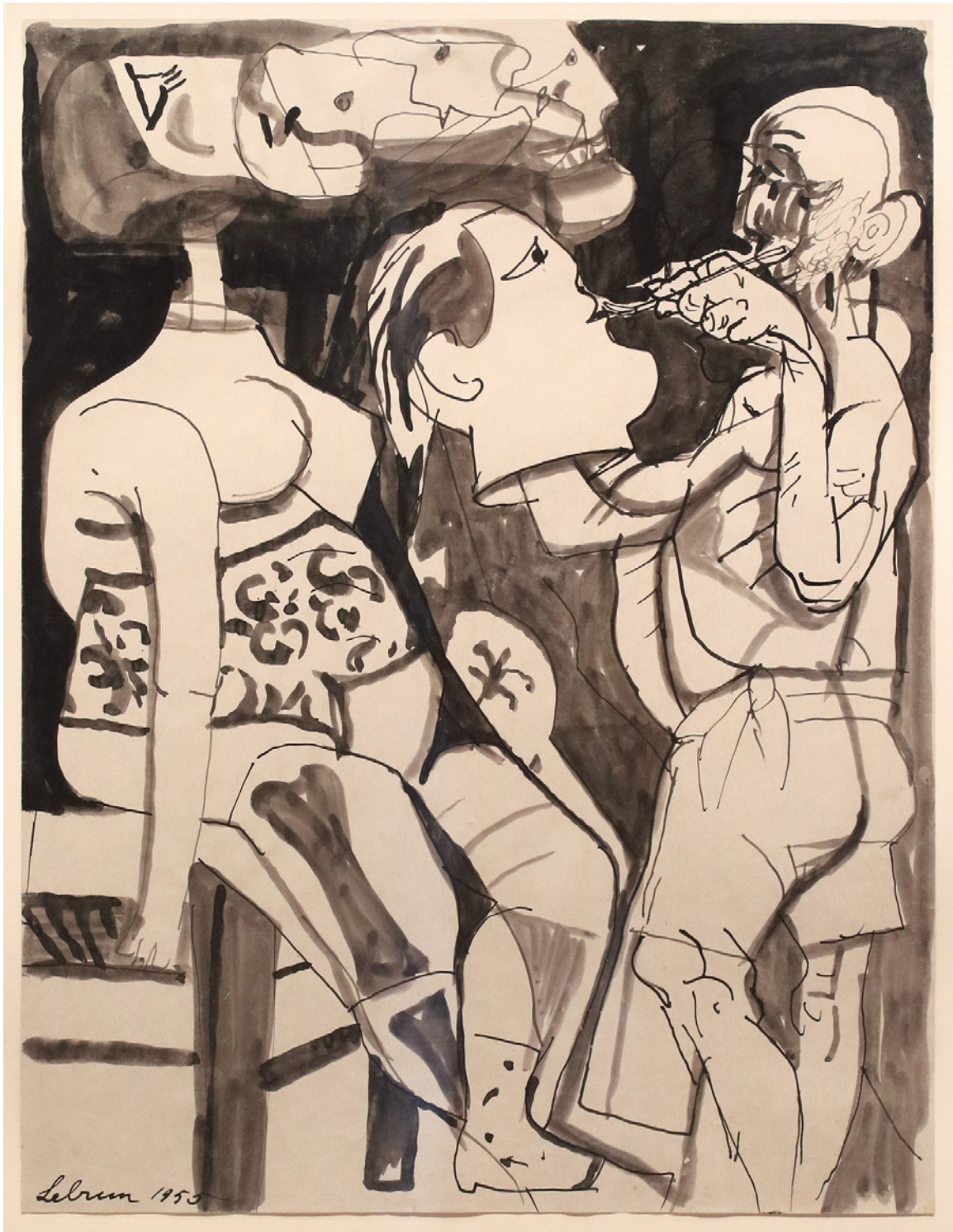
ARTESANO CON SU MUÑECA GRANDE, 1955

Ink Wash on Paper

24 3/4 x 19 inches

Signed and Dated Lower Left

JRFA #11327



MUÑECA, c. 1955
Ink Wash on Paper
7 3/4 x 18 1/4 inches
Signed Lower Left
JRFA #11335



Tonight they will set fire to the Tirana, also called La Colonela, for the feast of Corpus Christi. She is ready, towering over the square.

Jesus Piñata made her with bent canes and paper as “The Woman Who Told Lies”. He gave her an oversized head and eyes with the insipid and military stare for which she was famous in life. Her hollow interior is studded with giant firecrackers. In her adulterous loins he has placed a petard which will be the first to ignite, slowly winking garnet, then glowing to bright petunia, then exploding with insane rage. From here, with a scurrilous whistle, the fuse will light up a vine of coruscating morning-glories in the shape of her heart, which will rise through the sulphur of the wind pipe and the magenta tongue which will flare out in a comical malediction.

Vesalius, working over his dissections, could not foresee that some day this new chart of symbolic anatomy would light up the sky from here to the cold hills of Atotonilco...

— Rico Lebrun
Mexican Journal

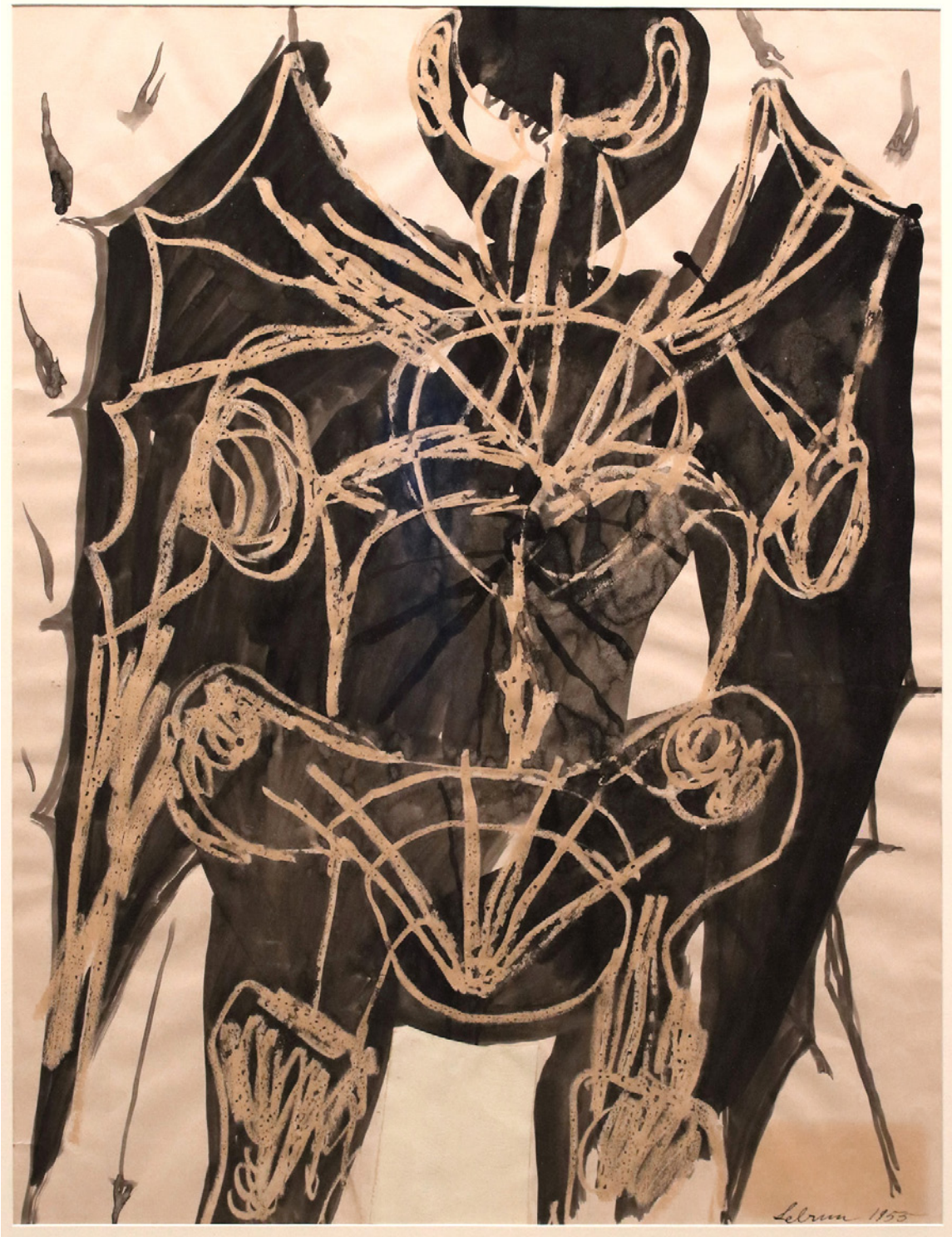
BURNING JUDAS, 1955

Ink Wash and Wax

24 1/2 x 18 1/2 inches

Signed and Dated Lower Right

JRFA #11336



TAUROMACHIA (WOMAN AND BULL), 1955

Ink and Brush on Paper

15 x 20 inches

Signed and Dated Lower Left

JRFA #11334

Literature:

Two Novels of Mexico

University of California Press, CA, 1956

Cover Illustration

In the Meridian of the Heart: Selected Letters of Rico Lebrun

David Godine Press, 2000



SPLIT HEAD, c. 1950

Ink Wash on Paper

17 3/4 x 24 inches

Inscribed Lower Right: "La, terra, ascolta" ("The earth listens")

JRFA #11328



FRAGMENTS OF THE LANDSCAPE, c. 1952

Ink on Paper
19 x 25 inches
JRFA #11329



Selected Public Collections

Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, TX
The Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock, AR
Arizona State University Art Museum, Nelson Fine Arts Center, Tempe, AZ
The Art Gallery of Toronto, Ontario, Canada
The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH
California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, CA
Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH
Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, Colorado Springs, CO
The Columbus Museum, Columbus, GA
Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH
The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO
East Los Angeles College, Vincent Price Art Gallery, Monterey Park, CA
Harvard University, Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, MA
The Huntington Library and Gallery, San Marino, CA
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
M. H. De Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, CA
Mills College Art Gallery, Oakland, CA
Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, NC
Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute Museum, Utica, NY
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO
North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC
Oakland Museum of Art, Oakland, CA
Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA
The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA
Philips Academy, Addison Gallery of American Art, Providence, RI
Pomona College Art Gallery, Claremont, CA
Rhode Island School of Design, Museum of Art, Providence, RI
San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, CA
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA
St. Paul Gallery of School and Art, St. Paul, MN
State University of New York, Purchase College, Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY
Syracuse University, Joe and Emily Lowe Art Center, Syracuse, NY
University of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI
University of Illinois, Krannert Art Museum, Urbana, IL
The University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, MI
University of Missouri-Columbia, Museum of Art and Archaeology, Columbia, MO
University of Nebraska, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, NE
The University of Oklahoma, The Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, Norman, OK
The Vatican Museum: Picture Gallery, The Vatican, Rome, Italy
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT
Washington University Gallery of Art, St. Louis, MO
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY



FIGURE SITTING ON A BEGGAR, 1961

Ink Wash on Paper

39 x 27 inches

Signed Lower Right

JRFA #11250



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