

Eric Murlot, Co-Chair of the 2015 Trophée des Arts Gala and member of the board of the French Institute Alliance Francaise, carries the legacy

of his grandfather Fernand Murlot's atelier in Paris where Françoise Gilot's lithographs and some of Air France's most famous posters were created.

“WANDER-LING” THROUGH THE ART

By Jean-Christian Agid



When did Françoise Gilot arrive at the Ateliers Murlot?

She arrived in the late 1940s. Françoise was one of the first women accepted at the Ateliers Murlot – and the only one there at the time. It was a fraternity, and women were not easily admitted.

Why?

It was a sign of the time. A lot of the artists were very macho, with strong personalities, and slightly misogynist. Françoise, after a period of suspicion, proved to them that she also was hardworking, passionate, and professional. She gained the other artists' respect as well as from the printers of the Atelier Murlot. Most importantly she truly impressed my grandfather with her tremendous education, her sensitivity, and her accomplishment as both a lithographer and an artist.

What is a lithograph?

The word itself comes from *lithos*, which in Greek means stone. The artist works with a waxy / greasy crayon to draw directly onto the limestone. Once a sheet of paper is pressed on the stone, only the areas which have been inked are able to be transferred onto the paper. The lithograph is created and in some cases, it is numbered and signed by the artist.

How many lithographs did Françoise Gilot create?

I believe at least more than 100 different editions over the years. There is a reference catalog of all of Françoise's lithographs. It was produced several years ago and is used to recognize and identify each edition so that one knows exactly how many proofs are in it, what the title was and the year that it was created.

Does her work at Murlot confirm that she was a major painter in France after the Second World War?

Several important galleries already represented Françoise, and she was starting to develop a serious demand. She was very well regarded within the art community, and lithographs allowed her to reach a greater audience of people that might not have been able to afford a painting. It is a medium many artists like to explore.

Where do we find Françoise Gilot's lithographs?

One can always go to an auction at Christie's or Sotheby's to find Gilot lithographs. But they are not as easy to find as one would think. These works have been collected by museums and private collections for a very long time.



Pour le Soir, 1993. Lithograph, 21.25 x 30 inches. ©Françoise Gilot. Courtesy Galerie Mourlot

Les Ateliers Mourlot not only worked with artists but also with corporations, and in this case with Air France?

My grandfather worked with artists such as Jean Colin in 1956 to create an Air France poster called *Amérique du Nord* and with Jean Carlu in 1958. He also worked with Roger Bezombes—who was the appointed artist for the French National Navy. Air France had asked Bezombes to produce a series of lithographic images for the airline based on an entirely new concept. The series of lithographic posters we printed with him for Air France will be available at the FIAF Gallery.

How different is the process for a poster created by Les Ateliers Mourlot?

Lithographic posters are produced in larger and unsigned edition – unlike limited editions for lithographs. The process remains exactly the same though.

What is the Roger Bezombes Air France portfolio?

It is a set of 12 images and was the source of a long controversy at the selection committee of Air France. Bezombes' idea was to depict the concept of travel more than its destinations. The images evoke the mystery of gastronomy, desert islands, speed, and a sense of freedom in a modern way, so modern that it took almost a decade for Air France to be comfortable with them. The artwork, filled with an unusually high number of colors, was finally published and exhibited at the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1981.

You chose to donate a lithograph that represents the Concorde, why?

Because I really like it, and to me the Concorde has always celebrated the close relationship between New York and France.



CIEL (from the portfolio "La Vie Autour du Monde"), 1981. Lithographic poster, 39.25 x 23.5 inches. ©Roger Bezombes. Courtesy Galerie Mourlot