

COLNAGHI



Bernard Buffet
(Paris 1928 – 1999 Tourtour)

Plage de Bretagne, 1969

Oil on board
19 x 24 cm
7 1/2 by 9 1/2 in.
Signed upper left: *Bernard Buffet*

Provenance

Sotheby's, Tel Aviv, May 31, 1990, lot 16
Acquired at the above sale by the present owner.

The authenticity of this work has been confirmed by Maurice Garnier.

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Born in Paris in 1928, Buffet came of age under the Nazi occupation. He studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in 1944, and by the age of 19 had had his first solo show.

Buffet's worldview was an austere vision of the world that chimed perfectly with the atmosphere of post-war alienation championed by the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. It earned him immediate popular acclaim and in 1948, at the age of 20, he was awarded the prestigious Prix de la Critique. Ten years later he was hailed by *The New York Times Magazine* as one of 'France's Fabulous Young Five', together with Françoise Sagan, Yves Saint Laurent, Roger Vadim, and Brigitte Bardot.

Active during a time when abstraction was the predominant artistic style, Buffet defended representational art and was an active member of the anti-abstraction group *L'homme Témoin* (The Witness-Man). His immediately recognisable style changed very little over the years. Buffet's work features portraiture, landscapes, still-lives, and historical and religious subjects, Buffet's *oeuvre* is primarily graphic, with spiky, angular and elongated forms rendered in a somber colour palette. This stylistic mode gives his work a melancholic tone that has been interpreted as a representation of the emotional state of the post-war generation. Buffet has had dozens of international exhibitions and was awarded a number of prestigious honours, including being made an Officer of the Légion d'Honneur in 1973 and being inducted into the Académie des Beaux-Arts in 1974.

In the early 1960s Buffet purchased "La Vallée", a Belle Époque-inspired villa in the seaside village of Saint-Cast, where he had vacationed as a child. Buffet settled there and worked until 1970, during which time he lived alternately between Côtes d'Armor and Paris. Saint-Cast le Guildo was an extraordinary place for Buffet. Beach games from the age of 7 left an indelible mark on him. It was also the place where, in 1945, his mother fell ill and died of a brain tumor. For better or worse, Brittany accompanied Buffet throughout his life and he in turn remained faithful to the French region until his death.

This location would be the subject of many of the artist's works. Brittany is the subject of a 1963 watercolour, a drypoint print made in 1964 and the 1969 painting *Plage de Bretagne*. Each one has a different composition with the present painting being the most resolved.

In 1997, as he was preparing an exhibition of the Joan of Arc cycle for the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rouen, Buffet noticed that his hands shook. It turned out to be an early symptom of Parkinson's disease, which would incapacitate him within the next two years. By the fall of 1999, he recognized that he would no longer be able to paint, and consequently took his own life on October 4, 1999.

Buffet's paintings have been acquired by some of the most notable museums around the world, including the Tate Modern, London, Museum of Modern Art, New York, and a dedicated collection at the Bernard Buffet Museum in Japan.