

“It would be interesting, therefore, to make a picture that was sufficiently true, sufficiently profound, sufficiently ‘internal’ to elicit in the public both the visual pleasure I have just experienced and the ramifications of thought whose point of departure has been the sight before me”
 RAOUL DUFY

Raoul Dufy, an oeuvre in which delectation meets meditation
DORA PEREZ-TIBI

“(…) Originally from Le Havre, Raoul Dufy arrived in Paris in 1900 to participate in the adventure of art and painting. It was in the French capital that he would encounter the peer pressure necessary to his artistic development. Influenced by the work of the Impressionists, he shifted from a static depiction of landscape to the lighter, more dynamic evocation exemplified in his views of the boardwalk and the beach at Sainte-Adresse, elect sites in his native Normandy. As he became aware of the limits of this method, however, he moved away from a visually descriptive representation of reality. His discovery at the 1905 Salon des Indépendants of the Fauvist works of Maurice de Vlaminck, André Derain and Henri Matisse, in particular the latter’s *Luxury, Calm and Pleasure*, led to a change of direction in his work. Thus it was that he embarked on an exciting program of research, experimentation and achievement. He wanted “to manage to render [his] reality” by reinventing observable reality. “The painter who trusts his eye alone is deceived,” he would claim, because for him “painting is making an image appear that is not the image of the natural appearance of things but which has the intensity of their reality”.

(…)The quality of the light and the landscape of his native Normandy would always constitute his mental homeland. Thus it was that after the belated Impressionism of his earlier work and his adherence to Fauvism in 1905, which revealed to him “the miracle of imagination at play in line and color,” Dufy elaborated his thesis of *color-light*. The varying subject matter of his art would be measured by the yardstick of this axiom, experimented with and applied to his entire oeuvre: “I was led spontaneously to what would subsequently remain my system, the theory of which is this: in following the light of the sun one wastes one’s time. The light of painting is something different; it is a light of distribution, of composition, a light-color.” Elsewhere, Dufy fleshed out this axiom, which guided his reasoning and his creativity: “When I speak of color, it is on the understanding that I am not speaking about the colors of nature, but the colors of paint, the colors of our palette, which are the words from which we create our pictorial language [...]. Do not think I am confusing color with paint, but as I turn color into the creative element of light— which must never be forgotten, color being nothing to my mind but the generator of light—one sees that in this role it is, with drawing, the great builder of painting, the major factor [...]. Color reduced to coloring-in is fine for images but it cannot give real or deep or brilliant pictorial satisfaction”.

Raoul Dufy’s vision of landscape
SOPHIE KREBS

“The greater and finally most important part of Raoul Dufy’s oeuvre is devoted to landscape. It is by no means absurd, then, to study this “genre” (in the classical sense of the word). Dufy was a *plein-air* painter, a peripatetic artist ever ready to set up his easel outdoors or to jot

down in his sketchpad this or that motif. From the first rough drawings of his youth, France, all of France from north to south, remained his favorite terrain— even though he contrived to travel elsewhere, to Germany, Italy, Morocco and America. Landscape painting was not only the personal, emotive vision of the artist in the face of nature, it was also a field of experimentation. The painter pondered the wherewithal of his discipline: line, color, composition, the relationship between form, shadow and light, near and far.

(...) Dufy, in the lineage of Cézanne, managed to reconcile the two styles of French landscape: “painting a Poussin from life.” He inscribed himself within the tradition of French landscape painting and convoked the great masters, in this instance Lorrain, with homages that were slightly disrespectful: the arrival in port of a fine sailing ship is accompanied by that of an ocean liner. Idle onlookers stroll along quays that resemble Marseille or Le Havre and take the place of sailors unloading treasures from afar at the foot of imaginary palaces. He reconstituted and modernized landscape painting consisting of real and quoted fragments “in the manner of” while forgoing all glorification of the landscape or any temptation to create a microcosm. It was Dufy’s great strength to have always adapted, in a style that was peculiar to him and which would take him time to perfect, ancient images associated with new motifs, in moving from the real to the imaginary, in tirelessly sketching what surrounded him and calling upon his decades-long memory, so much so that the indefatigably drawn sea, beach and port summon the female bather, the freighter, the palm tree. If Dufy was a born colorist, he was also a born landscape painter.”

Raoul Dufy’s unpublished drawings for “The Bestiary”, or “Procession of Orpheus”
CHRISTIAN BRIEND

“Rightly considered one of the earliest masterpieces of the artist’s book art form, *The Bestiary, or Procession of Orpheus (Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d’Orphée)* by Raoul Dufy and Guillaume Apollinaire has, from the 1960s to the present day, given rise to an extensive bibliography. Concerned with uncovering the visual and literary sources of *The Bestiary*—which, blending pagan and Christian imagery, sought its inspiration in the works of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance—but also with deciphering its deeper meaning as regards the poetics of Apollinaire, the general run of writers, mainly literary historians, it has to be said, have rarely paid attention to the genesis of Dufy’s woodcuts. Many of them have confined themselves to generalities or to stylistic commentaries, often pertinent ones at that. Misled, perhaps, by Dufy’s later style, and by his “‘mystique’ of the first drive” some have even convinced themselves, on the strength of the rare drawings they knew about, that “each, or almost each, woodcut [of *The Bestiary*] has been engraved with the fervor of improvisation.” In actual fact it transpires that far from being limited to the dozen drawings preserved today in the library of Harvard University and made known to the scientific community in 1964, the preparatory material for *The Bestiary* is not only much more abundant, but has also been entirely available since 1963. Bequeathed by the artist’s widow to the French State, the contents of Dufy’s studio, immediately assigned to the Musée National d’Art Moderne, where the Graphic Arts Department conserves them today, consists of a remarkable set of drawings and trial proofs for *The Bestiary*, which had been carefully preserved by the artist.

(...) Only rarely did Dufy’s woodcuts adhere strictly to Apollinaire’s verses, thereby eliciting an interesting complementarity between the two means of expression. Thus, far from following the poems word for word the engraver did not hesitate to do exactly the opposite in visual terms. *The Lion*, for example, is no longer the feline reduced to captivity in Hamburg, “unfortunate emblem / Of kings deposed and forlorn” evoked by the poet, but becomes instead a Lion of Saint Mark standing on its hind legs before the basilica bell tower in Venice.

There is nevertheless one composition, *The Peacock*, for which the poet requested Dufy to remain strictly faithful to his verse. Dufy had first planned to represent the bird head-on while fanning out its tail, but he decided otherwise after receiving Apollinaire's instructions: "The image ought to represent a peacock seen from the back with its tail dragging behind it, you can place a second bird in the background, displaying its tail if you wish, but there has to be one, the main one, dragging its tail."

(...) The different states of each of the versions assembled for Jacques Doucet (more than a dozen for the first *Orpheus*, for example) enable us to follow on an almost daily basis the progress of the work of cutting and gouging. Few artist's books of the 20th century have seen the different stages of their genesis, shown in the case of *The Bestiary* by a close collaboration between a painter and a poet, documented to such a degree."

Raoul Dufy, from exterior to interior
JUAN ÁNGEL LÓPEZ-MANZANARES

"(...) Toward the end of his life, Dufy confessed to Pierre Courthion his wish to "go beyond the classical laws of optics to discover other, uncommon ones, more psychological than physical, whose effect on painting can have unexpected repercussions on the eye and spirit of the beholder." Part of this psychological conception of painting is present in the group of works Dufy produced on the subject of the *Black Freighter*. Its origins can be traced back to the mid-1920s. Specifically, it was in *Nautical Festival at Le Havre* (1925) that Dufy first shrouded in a black halo two boats on which the sunlight falls. Thereafter the artist often used black to represent maximum luminosity.

(...) Attracted more than most to beauty, Dufy expressed the reality that surrounded him in an interiorized and wholly personal manner in which respect for the artistic media always prevails over literal transcription. More inclined to pick up a brush than a pen, he was never a theoretic painter as Matisse was. His last interviews with Pierre Courthion, however, reveal an artist with a depth of thought totally out of keeping with the idea of a painter of worldly festivities with which he has too often been associated. We will end with the following words the artist wrote in Perpignan in 1947, which again stress his conception of painting as the constant exploration of new means of expression: "I have found the essence of my painting in the journey and in the search; this is what gives my work that air of wandering for which it might be reproached, but I have always preferred studying and analyzing to establishing and exploiting a formula; I wanted all my followers to share with me the pleasure of these searches; that is why I prefer people to pay attention to the mechanism of my means rather than consider the anecdote, which is not the true aim of my paintings; the story in itself does not matter; it is the way of telling it that counts."