

DIANE DE POLIGNAC

**HENRI GOETZ**  
**(1909-1989)**



Henri Goetz and his dog Luc  
Photo: Hans Hartung

The artist Henri Goetz is born in New York in a French family. He settled permanently in Paris in 1930. His painting brings together both the lessons of Surrealism and the influences of lyrical Abstraction. Henri Goetz, an engineer by training, invented a technique for engraving and a new pastel.

## HENRI GOETZ'S EARLY LIFE IN NEW YORK

Henri Goetz was born in New York into a family of French origin on 29 September 1909. His father ran an electrical equipment company and naturally encouraged his son to pursue engineering. In 1927, Goetz moved to Boston to study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). It was at this time that he began to take an interest in art and decided to take drawing classes. After enrolling at Harvard University to study Art History in 1929, Goetz left just a year later to take painting classes at the Grand Central School of Art in New York. It was there that his fellow students told him about their experiences in Paris, inspiring the young artist to move to France.

## HENRI GOETZ IN PARIS

After arriving in Paris in 1930, Henri Goetz attended the Académie Julian art school and then frequented the studio of the painter Amédée Ozenfant. He mainly painted portraits: "At first I devoted myself solely to portraits, because the human figure seemed to me to contain a warmth that I had not found during my studies, when I was preparing for a career as an electrical engineer. During those six years, the painting I learned in the academies helped me to create likenesses and to delve deeper into the intimacy of the gaze of others."<sup>1</sup> The artist conveyed the characters of his models through a style of painting that was expressionist and colourful.

In 1934, Goetz met the painter Victor Bauer who introduced him to surrealist painting, Freudianism and the primitive arts. The following year, he married the painter Christine Boumeester, whom he had met at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. It was during this period that Goetz discovered the paintings of Picasso, Paul Klee, Fernand Léger and Kandinsky. The couple also became closely acquainted with Hans Hartung—their neighbour at 19 Rue Daguerre—who introduced them to the abstract painting circle. The three painters exhibited together at the Salon des Surindépendants in that year.

In 1936, Goetz's work shifted to a non-figurative style of painting with a surrealist slant. The artist explained: "If I choose the non-figurative world, it is because I believe that it is larger than the other. I believe that there is more to discover in the unknown than in the known. If the limit of the known is the unknown, the opposite does not seem to me to be true."<sup>2</sup> The following year, Goetz held his first solo exhibition at the Galerie Bonaparte (Van Leer) in Paris. The painter befriended the artists César Domela, Luis Fernandez, Julio Gonzales, Maria Helena Vieira da Silva and her husband Árpád Szenes, as well as Gérard Vulliamy and Gérard Schneider.

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1. *Mes démarches*, a handwritten letter by Goetz dated 10 June 1975, reproduced in a brochure published by the Galerie La Pochade for a touring exhibition that travelled around cultural centres.

2. Galpérine, Goetz, Paris, Musée de Poche, 1972.

## HENRI GOETZ AND SURREALISM

In 1938, Henri Goetz painted with tempera and an egg-based painting technique on photographic reproductions of historic masterpieces, as if in a posthumous collaboration with the masters. André Breton discovered the works in 1939 and called them "corrected masterpieces". These paintings were not exhibited until 1975, when they were shown for the first time at the Galerie Jean-Claude Bellier in Paris. The painter Henri Goetz was caught between surrealism and abstraction: "I believed I could create forms wherein my unconscious would join those of others. This approach was not unrelated to that of the surrealists but it was carried out in a universe of forms that were abstract for me, and yet evocative of known objects, sometimes organic. This resemblance hardly interested me, which distanced me from the surrealists. The space of my paintings resembled that of classical works. I was not considered an abstract artist and yet I felt closer to them."<sup>3</sup>

The Second World War broke out in 1939. As an American, Henri Goetz could not be conscripted because the United States had not yet entered the conflict. He became a member of the Resistance and went underground. Goetz and his wife left Paris for Carcassonne where they joined the Belgian painters Raoul Ubac and René Magritte. Back in Paris in the summer of 1940, Henri Goetz, Raoul Ubac and the painter Christian Dotremont founded the surrealist journal *La Main à la plume*. Goetz painted watercolour illustrations for the writers Paul Éluard and Georges Hugnet. In 1942, Hugnet's *La Femme Facile*, illustrated by Goetz, was published by Jeanne Bucher publications. The Galerie Jeanne Bucher exhibited Henri Goetz and Christine Boumeester together in the same year, and the two artists met Picasso.

## HENRI GOETZ IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

The United States entered the war in 1942 and Goetz and his wife took refuge in the South of France where they met Jean Arp, Alberto Magnelli and Nicolas de Staël. The couple then left Nice for Cannes where they met the Picabias. In 1943, Goetz created lithographs for *Explorations*, which was written by Francis Picabia and published in 1945 by Vville publications. The art critic Maria Lluïsa Borràs i González published a monograph on Francis Picabia in 1985 in which she stated that: "Picabia's return to abstraction was due to conversations with this young couple of painters, Christine Boumeester and Henri Goetz [...]. Open and cordial, they were friends with many artists of their generation—Hartung, Vieira da Silva, Domela, Atlan and Raoul Ubac—with whom they had founded *La Main à la plume*, considered the voice of the second surrealist wave."<sup>4</sup>

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3. *Mes démarches*, Henri Goetz, 10 June 1975

4. Maria Lluïsa Borràs i González, *PICABIA*, Barcelone, Ediciones Polígrafa, 1985

In 1944, the couple returned to Paris. The following year, the journalist René Guilly invited Henri Goetz to present the weekly programme *Le Domaine de Paris*—a series devoted to modern and contemporary painting—on Radio Diffusion. At that time, Goetz was close to Brancusi, Braque, Hartung, Kandinsky, Picabia, Picasso, Schneider and Soulages. In 1946, the painter took part in the group exhibition *10 ans de peinture* at the Galerie Breteau in Paris. In 1947, the director Alain Resnais made *Portrait d'Henri Goetz* for the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris, a short 16 mm film in which a painter created a work in front of the camera. Henri Goetz and his wife Christine Boumeester became naturalised French citizens in 1949.

### HENRI GOETZ AND ENGRAVING

Engraving was an important part of Henri Goetz's work, to which he devoted a great deal of time from 1940 onwards. In 1948, Goetz published an album of engravings with the publishing company Les Nourritures Terrestres, and then founded his own publishing house—the “Graphies” group—with his wife, the engraver Albert Flocon and the artist Raoul Ubac.

The total body of his engraved work is estimated at around 650 prints. The Department of Prints and Photography at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (“National Library of France”) has the largest collection of such works with a total of 425 prints made using various techniques—burin engravings, etching, lithography and serigraphy.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to mastering traditional engraving techniques, Goetz invented the carborundum printmaking process, also known as the “Goetz process”, in 1968.<sup>6</sup> The artist used this process exclusively from 1969 onwards. His extensive research work is documented in the book *La Gravure au carborundum*, which was published by the Galerie Maeght with a preface by the painter Joan Miró. The artist taught the technique to his friends—the painters Antoni Clavé, James Coignard, André Masson and Max Papart.

Goetz was trained as an engineer and had a natural curiosity for the sciences. It was during an experiment that he discovered that carborundum was resistant to heat and pressure. Silicon carbide (SiC), also known as carborundum, is an artificial abrasive obtained by heating powdered coal with silica at high temperatures until the mixture crystallises. For printmaking, these abrasive grains are mixed with glues or varnishes that bind them to the plate. The plate is then inked, and as the carborundum grains are rough, they retain the ink and create a multitude of black dots. This makes it the perfect material for creating halftones.

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5. Josimov, Stanko, *L'Œuvre gravé de Goetz*, research paper, Paris IV-Sorbonne, 2009

6. Henri Goetz, *La Gravure au carborundum*, Paris, Maeght Editions, 1969

### HENRI GOETZ AND PASTELS

Meanwhile, Henri Goetz was also beginning to investigate pastel techniques. In 1949, he asked the colour dealer Henri Sennelier to create a technique combining pastel and paint for his friend Picasso. This collaboration between the two inventors led to the creation of Sennelier oil pastels, inspired by the oil paint sticks developed by the painter Jean-François Raffaëlli in around 1890. In 1979, Goetz developed the concept of heating the paper before applying the pastel stick, which caused the latter to melt. This enabled him to paint directly with the colour, without using any intermediary tools. Henri Goetz also learned the technique of papyrus making and made his own drawing materials from 1979 onwards.

### HENRI GOETZ AND TEACHING

From 1950 to 1955, Henri Goetz taught painting at the Académie Ranson—an art school founded in Paris in 1908 by the painter Paul-Élie Ranson. Then, between 1955 and 1964, the artist taught painting at the following art schools: the Académie de la Grande Chaumière (until 1960) and the Notre-Dame-des-Champs, Raspail, Fréchet and Malebranche art academies, as well as at the American Conservatory in Fontainebleau. Goetz founded his own academy in 1965 in the premises of the former Académie d'André Lhote (at 18 Rue d'Odessa, also known as the “Passage du Départ”) where he taught on a voluntary basis until 1984. In the artist's own words: “This teaching brings me at least as much as it brings to others and I like to say that I am among the best students in my workshops, because the more one knows, the more one is able to learn.”<sup>7</sup>

### HENRI GOETZ'S LEGACY

Henri Goetz was made a Chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et Lettres in 1967. In 1970, Goetz became a member of the “1% commission” in favour of the decoration of public buildings. The Musée Goetz-Boumeester was created in 1983 in Villefranche-sur-Mer, France. The museum houses a donation of some fifty works by Christine Boumeester and as many by Henri Goetz, as well as some works from their collection created by their friends—Picasso, Picabia, Miró and Hartung.

Christine Boumeester died in Paris on 10 January 1971 and Henri Goetz died in Nice on 12 August 1989.

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7. *Ariel* no 1, for the exhibition Goetz, 13 years of painting 1952-1965, Galerie Ariel, 1966

## SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Akron (OH), Akron Art Museum  
Antibes (France), Musée Picasso  
Brussels (Belgium), National Museum of Modern Art in Brussels  
Fontevraud (France), Fontevraud Modern Art Museum – Martine & Leon Cligman Collection  
Grenoble (France), Musée de Grenoble  
Jerusalem (Israel), Israel Museum  
Middelburg (Netherlands), Zeeuws Museum  
Newark (NJ), Newark Museum  
New Orleans (LA), New Orleans Museum of Art – NOMA  
Paris (France), Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Georges Pompidou  
Paris (France), Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris  
Paris (France), Centre National des Arts Plastiques  
Phoenix (AZ), Phoenix Art Museum  
Rome (Italy), Museo di Arte contemporanea di Roma – MACRO  
Saint-Étienne (France), Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain in Saint-Étienne  
San Diego (CA), San Diego Museum of Art – SDMA  
San Francisco (CA), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art – SFMOMA  
Santa Fe (NM), New Mexico Museum of Art  
Strasbourg (France), Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain  
Toulouse (France), Les Abattoirs  
Vilafamés (Spain), Museo de Arte Contemporáneo  
Villefranche-sur-Mer (France), Musée Goetz-Boumeester  
West Palm Beach (FL), Norton Museum of Art  
Barcelona (Spain), Fundació Joan Miró

## SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Salon des Surindépendants, from 1935 to 1952  
Galerie Bonaparte (Galerie Van Leer), Paris, 1937  
Galerie Jeanne Bucher, Paris, 1942, 1945  
Galerie l'Esquisse, Paris, 1943  
Galerie Breteau, Paris, 1946, 1947  
Galerie Maeght, Paris, 1947  
Salon de Mai, from 1947 to 1960  
Mid-Century Art Gallery, Los Angeles (CA), 1948  
Galerie Colette Allendy, Paris, 1948  
Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, from 1948 to 1953  
Galerie des Deux-Iles, Paris, 1949  
Galerie du Siècle, Paris, 1950, 1951  
Galerie 55, Paris, 1951  
Numéro 21 Gallery, Florence, 1951  
Galerie Fiegel, Basel, 1952  
Galerie Evrard, Lille, 1952  
Galerie Marbach, Bern, 1952  
Galerie Art Moderne, Basel, 1952  
Kunstcabinet Horemans, Antwerp, 1953

Galerie Ariel, Paris, 1953, 1954, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1961, 1963, 1966  
Circle and Square Gallery, New York (NY), 1953  
Cittadella Gallery, Locarno, 1954  
Schwarz Gallery, Milan, 1954  
French Institute, Milan, 1954  
Salon Comparaisons, 1955, 1956  
Art Center, Atlantic City (NJ), 1956  
Obelisk Gallery, London, 1956  
Galerie La Hune, Paris, 1958, 1962-1973  
Obelisk Gallery, Rome, 1962  
French Institute, Mainz, 1963  
Sonet Gallery, Stockholm, 1960-1970  
Galerie Boisserée, Cologne, 1965  
Arta Gallery, The Hague, 1965  
Galerie Hervieu, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, 1965  
Daberkow Gallery, Frankfurt, 1965  
Maison de la Culture, Le Havre, 1967  
Franska Galleriet, Malmö, 1969  
Galerie Harmonies, Grenoble, 1969  
Daberkow Gallery, Frankfurt, 1969  
Galerie Sylviane Garnier, Saint-Omer, 1970  
Ostermalm Gallery, Stockholm, 1970  
Galerie Georges Bongers, Paris, 1972  
Galerie Armorial, Brussels, 1972  
Galerie Cour St-Pierre, Geneva, 1972  
San Francisco Gallery, Lisbon, 1973  
L'ARCO, Rome, Italy, 1973  
Örebro Gallery, Sweden, 1973  
Venezia Viva Gallery, Venice, 1974  
École des Beaux-Arts, Angers, 1974  
Galerie Soleil, Paris, 1974  
Galerie Hélène Trintignan, Montpellier, 1975, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1988, 1991, 1998, 2000  
Robert Hervieu Gallery, Malmö, 1975  
Centro d'Arte Il Castello, Venice, 1975  
Galerie Jean-Claude Bellier, Paris, 1975  
Galerie La Pochade, Paris, 1975  
Galerie Cavallero, Cannes, 1976  
Maison de la Culture, Ibn Rachiq, Tunis, 1976  
Palais de la Méditerranée, Nice, 1976  
Galerie du Palais, Marseille, 1976  
Septentrion, Lille, 1976, 1977  
Galerie Arcurial, Paris, 1977  
M'Arte Gallery, Milan, 1977  
French Institute, Tehran, 1978  
Galerie Bellechasse, Paris, 1978, 1979, 1981, 1983  
Galerie Simone Badinier, Paris, 1978  
Musée de Sète, Sète, 1978  
Musée de Melun, Melun, 1978  
Paul Bruck Gallery, Luxembourg, 1979  
Musée de Montbrison, Montbrison, 1979

Valle Orti Gallery, Valencia, 1979  
 Gallery of the Cabinet des Estampes, Colmar, 1979  
 Galerie Claude-Jory, Paris, 1979  
 Gallery of the Société Industrielle de Mulhouse, Mulhouse, 1979  
 Galerie de L'Escalier, Brussels, 1979  
 Palais des Congrès, Strasbourg, 1979  
 Saarbrücken Museum, Saarbrücken (Germany), 1980  
 Musée du Château, Belfort, 1980  
 Musée de Belfort, Belfort, 1981  
 Kutter Gallery, Luxembourg, 1981  
 Galerie Matarasso, Nice, 1981, 1982  
 Galerie des Maîtres Contemporains, Aix-en-Provence, 1983  
 Musée Goetz-Boumeester, Villefranche-sur-Mer, 1984  
 Galerie l'Obsidienne, Paris, 1985  
 Forum des Arts, Reims, 1985  
 Galerie Cupillard, Saint-Tropez, 1985  
 Galerie Jacques Verrière, Lyon, 1986  
 Palais de l'Europe, Menton, 1986  
 Crawshaw Gallery, 50 Years of Painting, London, 1986  
 French Institute, Edinburgh, 1987  
 Galerie Bailly, Nancy, 1987  
 Galerie Aittouarès, Paris, 1987, 2001  
*Henri Goetz*, retrospective exhibition, Crawshaw Gallery, London, 1987  
*Henri Goetz*, retrospective exhibition, Alliance Française centre, Edinburgh, 1987  
*Henri Goetz*, retrospective exhibition, Galerie Michel Reymondin, Geneva, 1988  
*Henri Goetz*, Studio Rita Gallé, Milan 1988  
*Henri Goetz*, retrospective exhibition, Galerie du Cobra, Paris, 1988  
 Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris, 1988  
 Théâtre de l'Opéra Municipal, Nice, 1988  
*Henri Goetz*, retrospective exhibition, Galerie Artuel, Paris, 1989  
 Galerie Bourgoïn-Pissaro, Paris, 1989  
*Henri Goetz*, retrospective exhibition, Galerie Hanin-Nocera, Paris, 1991  
 Galerie Verdaine, Geneva, 1991  
 Galerie 26, Paris, 1992  
*Goetz-Boumeester*, Galerie Hanin-Nocera, Paris, 1993  
 Raphaël Westend Gallery, Frankfurt, 1994  
 Strasbourg Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Strasbourg, 1995  
*La Côte d'Azur et la modernité, 1918-1958*, Musée de Nice, Nice, 1997  
 Galerie Elyette Peyre, Paris, 1999  
 Galerie Cazeau-Bérodière, Paris, 2001  
*Années 1935-1960*, Galerie Hélène Trintignan, Montpellier, 2009  
*Années 1960-1989*, Galerie Hambursin-Boisanté, Montpellier, 2009  
*Hommage à Henri Goetz*, Galerie Rémy Buccioli, Colmar, 2009

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