

GALERIE VAUCLAIR

MAY 24 TO JULY 28, 2019

24 RUE DE BEAUNE, 75007 PARIS

PAUL BERT - SERPETTE ANTIQUES MARKET - SAINT-OUEN

*Santo  
Gospir  
spirit*

A VILLA ON THE  
FRENCH RIVIERA

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# *Santo Sospir spirit*

## A VILLA ON THE FRENCH RIVIERA

From May to July, Galerie Vauclair will bridge the distance between Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat and Paris. The villa that Jean Cocteau "tattooed", currently undergoing refurbishing works, will come alive in Paris' 7<sup>th</sup> arrondissement and at the Paul Bert Serpette antiques market for the duration of the exhibition *Santo Sospir : une villa sur la Riviera*. The story of Santo Sospir is one of love at first sight and began with a promise that Alec Weisweiller made to his wife, Francine. When he was fleeing the war, Alec promised Francine that if he survived, he would buy her the house of her dreams. Several years later, on a fine summer day during a boat trip around Cap Ferrat, Francine remembered her husband's promise and pointed out this house close to the lighthouse. This mythical place went on to become the melting pot of friendships between the Weisweiller family and the greatest artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Poet Jean Cocteau would leave his mark on the villa with his magnificent frescoes, sketched out in the space of six months in a creative whirlwind. The villa owes its extraordinary decorative atmosphere to Madeleine Castaing, a peerless, revolutionary decorator of her era.

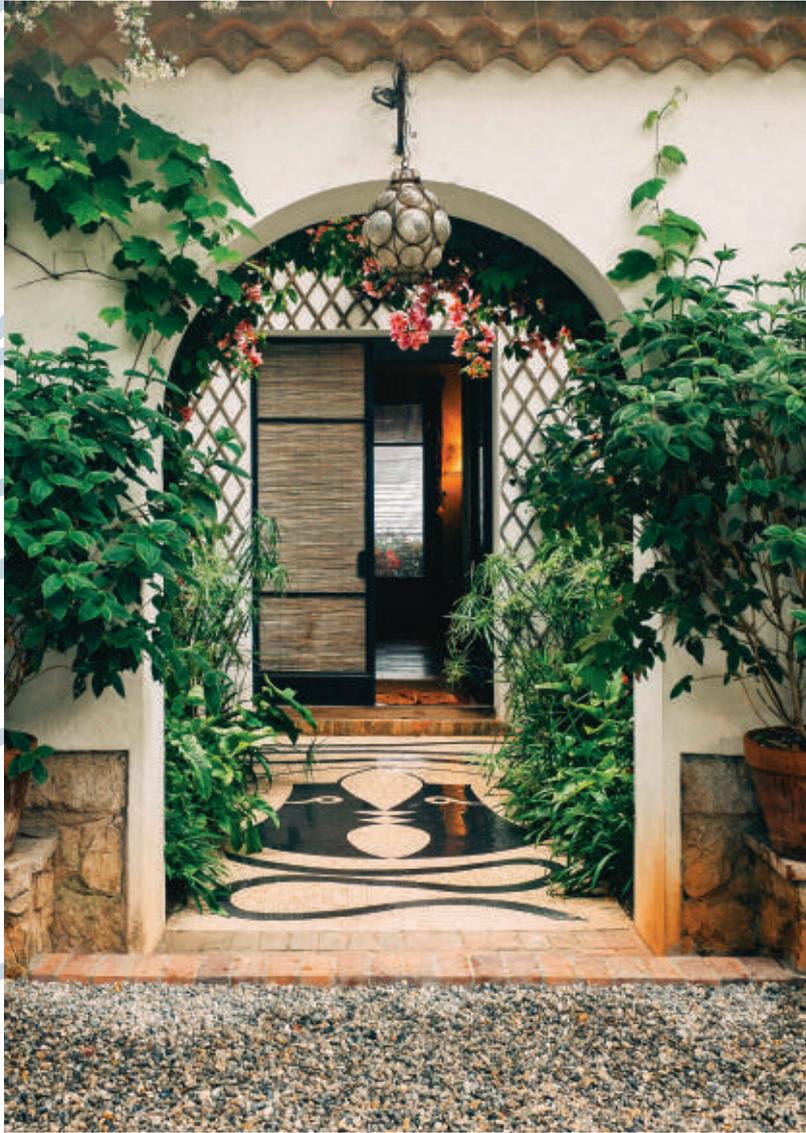


Photo © Romain Laprade

Away from Santo Sospir, the decor that Laurence and Denis have recreated takes the visitor on a journey to unwind on the banks of the Riviera in an atmosphere where exoticism and mythology meet.

During this exhibition, let yourself be lulled by the Mediterranean whispers of Santo Sospir and its surreal ambiance combining wall frescoes, Asian-inspired bamboo and rattan furniture, "Muguet" armchairs and seashell vases.



Santo  
Sospir  
Spirit

Galerie Vauclair, located at 24 rue de Beaune in Paris' 7<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, has made its mark as one of the major galleries specializing in 19<sup>th</sup>-century art, and more particularly, ceramic arts and rattan furniture from the 1850s to 1900s.

For almost thirty years, Laurence and Denis Vauclair-Rouquette, experts at the *Chambre Nationale des Experts Spécialisés en Objets d'Art et de Collection* (France) and members of the Majolica International Society (USA), have sought to debut original pieces and feature well-known ceramic artists, sculptors, decorators and more from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## GALERIE VAUCLAIR & SANTO SOSPIR

One of their areas of focus is rattan furniture from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Having built up a reputation in the field, several of their ensembles have made their appearance on film sets, some of which were on display during the exhibition *Rotin, décor de stars* in 2018. While the gallery has, for the past 20 years, been committed to highlighting the ties that bind iconic works to their original settings, the **Santo Sospir Spirit** exhibition aims to conjure up memories of the eternal villa in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat.

Closely following the narrative of Eric Marteau, the guardian of the temple, Laurence and Denis have recreated a mythical interior, interwoven with tales akin to exceptional works of art.

Santo  
Sospir  
spirit



Photograph of Francine Weisweiler and Jean Cocteau / Source: Weisweiler family archives

## A PROUDLY ECLECTIC GALLERY

While shooting the film *Les Enfants Terribles* in 1950, Cocteau met Francine Weisweiler, leading to what would become for each of them "friendship at first sight". In the summer of 1950, when he was invited to stay over at her villa in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, the writer adorned the walls of the villa with frescoes that drew their inspiration from Greek mythology. Perched atop a ladder, he tirelessly sketched the outlines in charcoal while adding color to his drawings. In the meantime, an Italian workman prepared powdered pigments mixed in with raw milk. Gods mingled with mortals — fishermen or priests, sea urchins, poetic verses and portrayals of Orpheus in a symbiotic existence. The man who reeled out his line like he would a poem thereby determined the future of Santo Sospir, a trendsetter that in 1995 was listed in France's Supplementary Inventory of Historical Monuments.

The villa is a jewel case that protects and sublimates the creative syncretism of Cocteau, who devoted himself to ceramics as much as he did to painting, cinema and drawing. Similarly to Santo Sospir, Galerie Vaclair is like a house overlooking the Riviera; one chooses to enter it not by choice, but by following the heart.

## MADELEINE CASTAING AND SANTO SOSPIR

Santo Sospir sealed another union — between the most sought-after decorator in the 1950s and the Weisweiller family. Jean Cocteau's close collaboration with Madeleine Castaing (who had provided the decor for several of his films) reached its peak with Santo Sospir, where Castaing's advice shaped the interior layout of the villa. Bamboo and rattan reigned supreme while ornaments such as wicker panels gracing the walls of the living room fully brought out the decorator's signature. The furniture's colonial-era exoticism combined with the surrealism of Cocteau's murals, exude the inimitable feel of the Mediterranean villa. Black and green chintz drapes blend in with the wicker panels and rattan furniture. The honor of the quintessential Riviera style at Santo Sospir therefore goes to Castaing, who by her own admission, declared that she transformed houses the way others write poems.

A rebel ahead of her time, she regularly surprised her peers. She was one of the first decorators to have coordinated the home with the garden, which according to her, was one and the same. This vision is palpable at Santo Sospir, in which the atmosphere of the Côte d'Azur can be felt both inside and outside the villa. In the same capacity as the Weisweiller family, Madeleine Castaing is an inspiration and role model for Laurence and Denis. The renowned decorator of the 20<sup>th</sup> century inspires them every day as they scout for decors, design and staging.



# *Santo Sospir spirit*

## A MULTIFACETED DREAM



Photo © Romain Laprade

Furnished in a typical Riviera style, the Santo Sospir villa, which overlooks the bay of Villefranche-sur-Mer atop 150 steps leading up from the beach, sets itself apart by the diversity of its ambiances. This villa, which has retained its regional flavor, includes four rooms that present the many worlds that Cocteau and Castaing have left behind — the Diana room with a bathroom (designed for Francine Weisweiller) contrasts with the Narcissus room (for Doudou, Jean Cocteau's adopted son and heir) and the large dining room adorned with a gigantic Judith and Holofernes tapestry woven by Bouret d'Aubusson, of which Cocteau had made a drawing on cardboard. On one side, floral majolicas go together with sensual siestas, while on another heavy drapes go with wicker baskets. The spectacular yet dreamy aura that these rooms breathe conspires to make Santo Sospir the perfect gateway.

*Venus Had I not brought you up,  
Had my house not been built with my poems,  
Empty I would feel and down I would end up.*

Jean Cocteau

Extract from the *Poète de trente ans* (The thirty-year-old poet)



*Santo  
Sospir  
spirit*

## GALERIE VAUCLAIR'S WORKS DRESS UP IN THE COLORS OF THE RIVIERA

Madeleine Castaing played a major role in rattan making a comeback in home interiors and gardens, and she was also instrumental in bringing the Napoleon III style — considered contrarian at the time — back into vogue. To recreate the spirit of Santo Sospir in Paris and Saint Ouen, Laurence and Denis have exhibited their choice pieces of furniture and ceramics.

*Santo  
Sospir  
spirit*

GALERIE VAUCLAIR  
ACCOLAY CERAMIC LAMP  
AND RATTAN FURNITURE  
FROM THE 1950S/60S  
© THIERRY MALTY



## SANTO SOSPIR IN PARIS & SAINT-OUEN

*Santo  
Sospir  
spirit*

GALERIE VAUCLAIR  
TABLE WITH ROOT BASE  
IN WOOD AND HAZEL  
WOOD VENEER, EARLY  
20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY. METAL  
CHAIRS, SECOND HALF  
OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
© THIERRY MALTY



*Santo  
Sospir  
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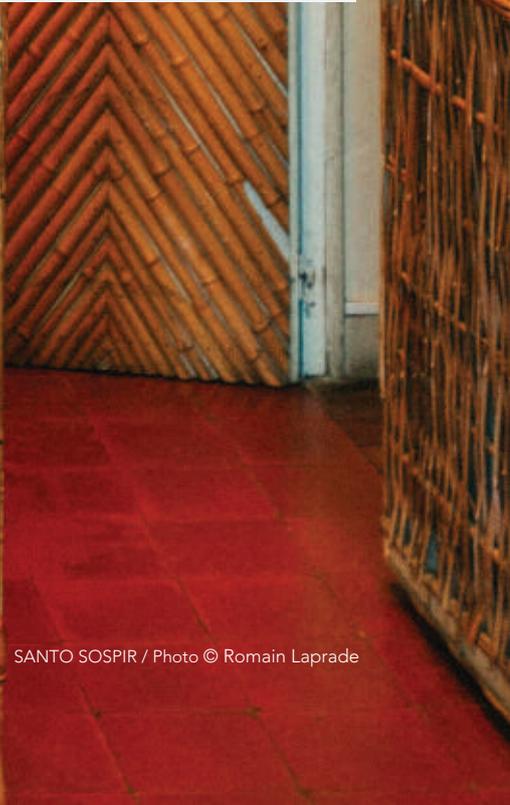
GALERIE VAUCLAIR  
ONAING, TULIP HOLDERS,  
CIRCA 1880  
SIDEBOARD IN BAMBOO  
AND HAZEL WOOD  
VENEER, CIRCA 1960  
© THIERRY MALT





*Santa  
Sospir  
spirit*

GALERIE VAUCLAIR  
EICHWALD CERAMIC,  
FIGURINES WITH CROCUSES,  
LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
PERRET & VIBERT, TWO-PART  
SIDEBOARD IN BAMBOO AND  
LACQUER, LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
© THIERRY MALTY



*Santo  
Sospir  
spirit*

GALERIE VAUCLAIR  
FRANCE, EARTHENWARE  
PALISSY-STYLE CONES,  
CIRCA 1880  
AUDOUX-MINET, RATTAN  
DECKCHAIR, CIRCA 1950  
© THIERRY MALTY



*Santo  
Sospir  
spirit*

GALERIE VAUCLAIR  
PERRET & VIBERT, FRANCE,  
RATTAN ARMCHAIR, CIRCA  
1880  
FRANCE, WOODEN DESK  
WITH WOOD VENEER, EARLY  
20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
© THIERRY MALTY



Santa

Mary

Spirit

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