

# MODERNISM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Gallery Exhibition Schedule

## JEAN DESSIRIER: *Mythologies*

June 15–August 19, 2017

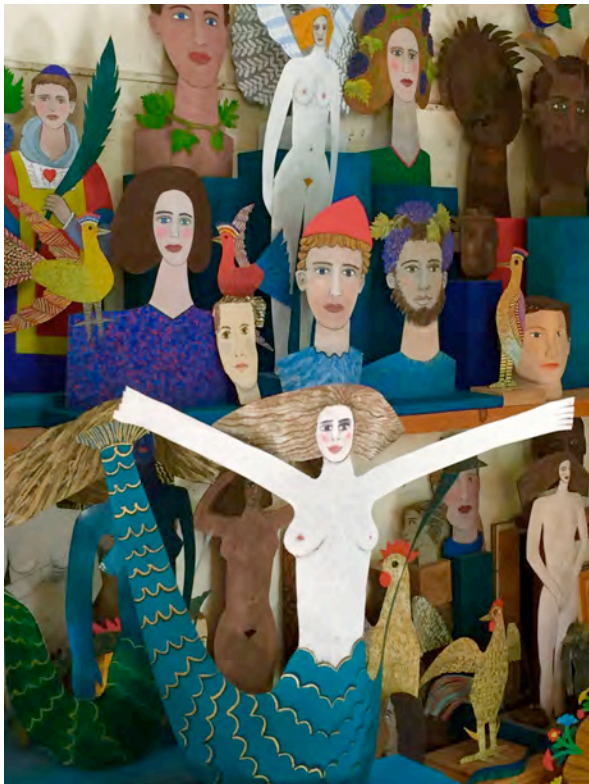
Modernism is pleased to present the first U.S. exhibition of Jean Dessirier, a French sculptor and painter whose raw materials are ancient myth and the old rooftops of Paris. Since the early 1980s, Dessirier has crafted polychromatic sculptures out of salvaged roofing zinc, evoking legends about sirens and fauns. Other artworks by Dessirier are carved out of scrapwood, and other timeless themes emerge directly from his imagination.

Trained as a glassmaker, Dessirier was employed by Versailles at the age of 20, working on the restoration of the Grand Trianon. Exposure to the palace's spectacular painting collection inspired Dessirier to enroll in a Montparnasse drawing school and subsequently the Academy André Lhote as a student of painting and printmaking. Yet it was only after he began painting pictures of animals and people on pieces of wood –discarded by a friend who made furniture – that he found his true métier.

"From a formal point of view, I realized that the painted sculpture simulated volume," he says. "So a little unexpectedly, I developed a personal style."



*Femme Fleur*, 2015, painted zinc & wood  
15 x 9.5 x 4 inches



Sculptures in the artist's studio, Paris

Myriad artistic influences have informed Dessirier's aesthetic. The strong quality of primitivism derives from his appreciation of archaic sculpture from Egypt and Mesopotamia, as well as the "primitive beauty of Brueghel's universe" and the celebrated 19th century paintings of Henri Rousseau. Dessirier credits Van Gogh with showing him how to capture emotional intensity, Matisse with teaching him about color and dynamism, and Picasso with demonstrating the potential of mixing media.

Dessirier deftly brings all of these influences into the realm of mythology. For instance, he has often depicted sirens, women with the bodies of birds or fish who were said to seduce men with their irresistible song. Sculpturally he is entranced by their hybrid form, and poetically he is moved by their habit of seduction and abandonment. "For me, they represent a sublimation of desire," he says.

Women are more broadly present in Dessirier's work, often nude, and sometimes in the company of birds. "The bird is a companion," he explains, "resting on her head or shoulders in order to sing of the beauty of the world." The motif derives from his own childhood, and the goldfinches

# MODERNISM

he kept as pets.

Dessirier makes all of his sculptures in a countryside studio on the periphery of Paris. His process begins with a pencil sketch on scrap metal, which is then cut and shaped by hand before it is painted with colors carefully selected to work in harmony with the zinc's natural patina. Finally Dessirier crafts and paints a pedestal.

The result is a fully autonomous work. As in so many myths, the magic is in the transmutation.

The public is invited to attend a reception for the artist on **Thursday, June 15th**, from 5:30-8PM.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CALL: 415/541-0461 / FAX: 415/541-0425 / [INFO@MODERNISMINC.COM](mailto:INFO@MODERNISMINC.COM)

CV & HI-RES IMAGES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.



Clown à l'oiseau, 2015, painted zinc & wood  
14 1/2 x 11 3/4 x 3 1/8 inches

The artist in his Studio, Paris. Photo: Damien Blondeau.

