



François-Xavier Lalanne (1927 - 2008)

Fontaine aux Oiseaux de Williamsburg, 1994

Patinated bronze and carved stone

26 by 25 3/8 by 24 5/8 inches (66 x 64.5 x 62.5 cm)



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Edition HC 4 of 4

Inscribed and numbered "FXL HC 4/4" and stamped with foundry mark "CHAPON"

Provenance: Guy Pieters Gallery, Belgium
 Private collection, Belgium
 Private collection, Europe

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Fontaine aux Oiseaux de Williamsburg, 1994



François-Xavier Lalanne's *Fontaine aux Oiseaux de Williamsburg*, 1994 is a superb exemplar of the artist's later work. Behind the elegant and refined contours of the work's three birds lay the unique visual grammar of François-Xavier Lalanne, a self-taught, pioneering artist who forged a path against the artistic trends of his time.

François Xavier Lalanne was a French sculptor and installation artist who frequently worked with his wife Claude under the sobriquet *Les Lelanne*. He incorporated animal and mythological imagery into his sculptures and furniture pieces. He

invented a bestiary composed of monkeys, rhinos, birds, camels, toads, hippos and cats, among others. His fascination with bringing figurative depictions of wildlife into domestic spaces while blurring the lines between sculpture and design desacralizes the medium of sculpture to give it a familiar dimension.

Before Lalanne began his sculptural practice, He worked as a guard at the Louvre Museum. His time there, particularly in the Oriental Antiquities departments, deeply influenced his art. The reliefs he studied, with their shapes, curves, and religious iconography sparked his fascination with the stylization of symbols and naturalistic representations of animals in Egyptian and Assyrian civilizations. This, combined with the influence of his friend and neighbor Constantin Brancusi, led Lalanne to emphasize smoothness and fullness of form in his animal sculptures, breathing new life into the medium.

Lalanne's relentless focus on animals in his artistic practice was a deliberate subversion of the

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Western concept of traditional statuary and the hegemony of abstraction in the post-war era. In the present work, three birds perch around the perimeter of a fountain. Birds in many ancient civilizations were considered couriers of the Gods and represented a gateway between worlds, carrying messages of love, fertility, life, and even omens of bad fortune. Here, the luscious bronze and carved stone, evoking an ancient ruin, coupled with the symbolic figure of the bird, omnipresent in ancient cosmogonies, create a powerful visual presence whose forms, curves, and tranquil air remain timeless.

Similar works to *Fontaine aux Oiseaux de Williamsburg* can be found in museum collections around the world, including *Lapin À Vent (Wind Rabbit)*, 1994-2004, The Clark Art Institute, Massachusetts, and *La Mouche toilet*, 1966, The Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.



François-Xavier Lalanne, *Lapin À Vent (Wind Rabbit)*, 1994-2004, The Clark Art Institute, Massachusetts



François-Xavier Lalanne, *La Mouche toilet*, 1966, The Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris