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# Corot's Dreamy Trees, Erotic Sculpture, Brancusi Photos

By Lance Esplund - Jun 6, 2012 12:01 AM ET

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In his paintings and drawings, Jean- Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796-1875) imbues the landscape, sky and especially trees with human presence, as if they are actors in grand dramas.

Trees, which Corot treated as subjects for portraiture, often upstage the human figures.

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"A Horseman and Traveler on Foot Nearing Two Trees" (1874) by Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot. The charcoal and black chalk drawing, in which the artist personifies trees, is on view in "J.B.C. Corot: Unpublished Drawings," up through July 13 at the Jill Newhouse Gallery. Source: Jill Newhouse Gallery via Bloomberg

Corot rarely painted individuals. Instead, he worked with archetypes. His trees, like his women, are daydreamers, muses, goddesses.

In the [Jill Newhouse Gallery's](#) small retrospective, "J.B.C. Corot: Unpublished Drawings," there's a charcoal-and-black-chalk drawing, "A Horseman and Traveler on Foot Nearing Two Trees" (1874), in which one robust tree hugs or overtakes a slenderer sapling. The trees are adversaries or lovers -- perhaps both.

In his expressionistic charcoal drawing "The Destruction of Sodom" (circa 1857), a copy of Corot's own painting in which tiny figures flee the burning city, a wispy tree is sole witness to their flight and plight. Sodom is gone, yet Corot has set the figures on fire.

## Rare Drawings

Surprisingly, this is the first U.S. show devoted to Corot's drawings. Most of them have never been exhibited.

The more than 30 works on display span his career, from the early, crisp, Ingres- and Poussin-esque portraits and landscapes from his sojourn in [Italy](#) to the late, somber works closer to the hand of Claude and Delacroix, even prefiguring Soutine.

Corot's range of narrative, style and approach is astonishing.

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An installation view of "Ma Westerlund Roosen: Sculptures, 1976-2012." Betty Cuninghams Gallery's retrospective of sculptor Ma Westerlund Roosen is up through June 29. Source: Betty Cuninghams Gallery via Bloomberg

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An installation view of "Ma Westerlund Roosen: Sculptures, 1976-2012." The retrospective at Betty Cuninghams Gallery comprises 40 works, mostly models and maquettes for larger sculptures. Source: Betty Cuninghams Gallery via Bloomberg

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"View of the Studio: Mademoiselle Pogany II with Flower" (c. 1923) by Constantin Brancusi. The gelatin silver print is among 32 vintage photographs shot and printed by Brancusi (1876-1957) in the stunning exhibition "Brancusi: The Photographs," up through June 23. Source: Bruce Silverstein Gallery via Bloomberg

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"Sleeping Muse" (c. 1920s) by Constantin Brancusi. The artist's small, vintage gelatin silver print transforms his marble sculpture, "Sleeping Muse," into a crystal ball. Source: Bruce Silverstein Gallery via Bloomberg

Yet it's his endlessly inventive handling of every mood of light -- Corot's true protagonist -- that makes this show a must-see.

Prices for the drawings range from \$15,000 to \$85,000, while the three paintings in the exhibition are priced between \$170,000 and \$700,000. The show is on through July 13 at 4 E. 81st St.; +1-212-249-9216; <http://jillnewhouse.com>.

Mia Westerlund Roosen (born 1942) makes spare, often humorous, sometimes erotic, figurative-based abstract sculptures.

She cites her training as a dancer for her artworks' grounding in figuration.

But her sources range from [Leonardo da Vinci's](#) notebook drawings of the forces of nature to stacks of dishes, animals, architecture, human heads, limbs and internal organs.

### Baroque Minimalism

She embraces everything from Bernini's unfurling Baroque extravagance to the pared-down Minimalist cube.

The [Betty Cuninghams Gallery's](#) quirky exhibition spans Westerlund Roosen's career from 1976 to 2012.

It comprises roughly three dozen tabletop works, mostly models and maquettes for larger sculptures. There are also five recent finished works from the past two years.

They are arranged in intimate groups on low, multilevel pedestals so that they engage in associative conversation.

"Ariel" (1983) suggests a reclining odalisque, whose long, scissor legs extend into a bird beak. "Blue Madonna" (2010) is a whirling dervish, while "Pompadour" (1986) looks like a disembodied pair of crossed dancer's legs during a bow.

In "American Beauties" (2011), the artist whimsically sandwiches two double-sided human breasts -- or flying saucers.

Westerlund Roosen's larger sculptures can both under- and overstate their themes. Seen here -- small and en masse -- her work is as satisfying as it is enigmatic.

Prices range from \$6,000 to \$30,000. The show runs until June 29 at 541 W. 25th St.; +1-212-242-2772; In cache <http://www.bettycuninghamsgallery.com>.

### Brancusi's Vision

"Brancusi: The Photographs," a serene exhibition of 32 vintage pictures at the [Bruce Silverstein Gallery](#), makes me wish that all great artists throughout history had access to the camera and the inclination to photograph their work.

Looking at the images assembled, all shot and printed by Brancusi during the period 1917-1936, we are taken on an otherworldly journey into the artist's studio practice.

Constantin Brancusi (1876-1957) created not only his revolutionary sculptures, what he referred to as "essences" of the world, but also their innovative bases. He also arranged his works -- the heads, birds, fish, gods and totems -- into monumental groupings.

At Silverstein, studio shots of finished and unfinished sculptures, spaces, forms and shadows suggest an Aladdin's cave in which Brancusi's "Birds" gleam like treasure.

### Surreal Games

These images instill the studio with ritualistic power. In views of works such as his "Endless Column," the carved-wood sculpture transforms from totem back into strange tree. In others, the works become pieces navigating surreal game boards.

In one view of the studio, two works become mother and child. In another, a photo of "Eve & Plato" (c. 1922), one sculpture looks like an alien contemplating ancient ruins.

In the artist's masterly photographs of his sculpted heads, "Sleeping Muse" (c. 1920s) and "Prometheus" (c. 1926-27), Brancusi moves beyond documentation or even meditation.

He peers into his own work as if into a crystal ball.

Prices range from \$50,000 to \$250,000. The exhibition runs through June 23 at 535 W. 24th St.; +1-212-627-3930; <http://www.brucesilverstein.com>.

(Lance Esplund is U.S. art critic for Muse, the arts and leisure section of Bloomberg News. The opinions expressed are his own.)

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