

Crocq / Tatin Exhibition

On Wednesday May 17 at 5pm, Fondation Suzanne Bastien Gallery will be opening a retrospective exhibition of the creative legacy left by artists Robert Tatin d'Avesnières and Henri Crocq. Tatin and Crocq, two French painters who left their homeland in the 1950's to travel and work in the Pacific over the course of three decades.

About Robert Tatin d'Avesnières "I have known in this land all that in life a man can hope to know" Fleeing his father who stifled yet inspired him and the parochial atmosphere of the French provinces, Tatin (aged 25) left his home town of Laval in the west of France. Inspired by this mixture of artistic dreams and stereotyped ideal a young Tatin first headed to Tahiti for seven years. There he loved Elisa, a Tahitian girl whose beloved face remains the mythical subject of happiness lost, suffering and a recurrent theme in his work.

For reasons unknown Tatin fled Tahiti for Noumea, New Caledonia in 1957 where he produced a staggering 170 paintings showcasing his talent and depths of despair for his first exhibition in 1962. That same year, exhaustion and everything Tatin disliked about Western civilization led him to venture to Port Vila, Vanuatu (then the New Hebrides). Thinking he would only stay few months to stage an exhibition, he became so fond of this island group, its landscape, and the friends he made he stayed here for 14 years painting its countless dimensions. Internal struggles and grief experienced earlier in life led him to alcohol abuse. This, coupled with a frugal existence began to destroy his health at this time. After traveling home to France in 1977 Tatin had the opportunity to return to Tahiti in 1982 for a final exhibition. He passed away just days after in Mamea.

Robert Crocq was born in the Paris region in 1925, Crocq travelled to the Pacific in the 1955. It was in 1958 in Noumea, New Caledonia at the age of 32 that Crocq exhibited for the first time in the Pacific.

In 1964 he then exhibited in Port Vila, Vanuatu before then travelling and exhibiting in Latin America (Sao Paulo and Buenos Aires). On Crocq's frequent trips to Port Vila he lived and worked with the late Suzanne Bastien on her property where the Fondation Suzanne Bastien Gallery is now situated. The work of Henri Crocq is of a great variety of aspects but is always of an unusual power projected in a resolutely abstract vein.