



Corneille: "Mon canal chante", 1949

Despite the short life of the CoBrA movement and countless internal conflicts, in a moment of hope, a shared, powerful, magical universe, inhabited by all manner of creatures and strange beings, was created. Birds in particular occupy a central place – in a more or less recognisable form – as a promise of the freedom that was so essential after the war. Birdsong is completely unique – no other animal sings this way – and just like our own song, it evokes our deepest feelings; from melancholy and sadness to joy and comfort. Birds are therefore one of the most meaning-laden symbols – from the reborn Phoenix to the Christian dove of peace – not just in our own cultural sphere, but in all cultures; through art, religion, myths and literature. They evoke an immediate longing for distant horizons, and the impossible dream of mastering the sky.

Born in Belgium to Dutch parents, Corneille (Cornelis Guillaume Van Beverloo) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Amsterdam from 1940–43, where he met Karel Appel. He was later a co-founder of CoBrA, where, possessed of a poetic disposition, he also wrote poems for the group's publications.

Corneille's works draw reference from real experiences, emotions and sensations, linked together in the infinite space of imagination. In 1949, he lived in Amsterdam, where, after the long, isolated and hard years of the war, he felt harmoniously connected to the world around him: "Amsterdam, this calm harbour, where things seem to find their bliss, and where my hand continuously draws and draws a line – living and secret – a line that connects nature with the imagination, as the horizon connects the earth with the sky..." (Corneille from "Corneille", Carl-Henning Pedersen and Else Alfelts Museum, 2005 p. 26).

That experience was translated into his art. In this painting, several visual angles and perspectives converge within the same frame. While the background consists of a kind of flickering landscape which, from a bird's-eye view, is divided into smaller fields of colour – the blue of the water and the green of the vegetation – we have the central figures in the form of black, orange-billed birds, which attract the eye. Nature is personified, given life, and breathes in time with the trickling of the water in the song of the canal.



199

**199^{ARR}
CORNEILLE**

b. Liège 1922, d. Auvers-sur-Oise 2010

"Mon canal chante" (My canal sings), 1949. Signed Corneille 49; signed, titled and dated on the reverse. Oil on canvas. 70 x 70 cm.

Literature: Christian Dotremont: "Corneille. Bibliothéque de Cobra. Première série: Les artistes libres. Redacteur Asger Jorn", Copenhagen, 1950, ill. The book is signed by Corneille during a visit to Copenhagen in 1988.

Exhibited: Tontoonstelling "Vrije Vormen 1", 14 April – 8 May 1949.

Exhibited: "Fremmed Kunst i Dansk Eje", Louisiana, Humlebæk, Denmark, 1964, cat. no. 65.

Exhibited: Kunstforeningen, Copenhagen, 1971, cat. no. 23.

Provenance: Galerie Birch, Copenhagen.

Provenance: J.A. Lorenzen, Denmark.

Provenance: Private collection, Denmark. DKK 2,500,000–3,000,000 / € 335,000–400,000