



Even so, in the mid-1930s the growing liveliness of his forms presaged a return to the human figure. And in 1939, just when abstraction was beginning to dominate the international scene, his intuition led him increasingly towards figuration and "the real".

Alerted to the fragility of things by the outbreak of the Second World War, he set about applying his abstract language to a reconstruction of the image, the result being everyday street scenes stripped of all sentimentality.

Calling a temporary halt to his career as a painter, Héliou joined the French army, but was taken prisoner in 1940. Initially published in 1943, *They Shall Not Have Me*, his account of his escape, was recently translated into French and became a best seller.

Back in France in 1946 and married to Pegeen Vail, Peggy Guggenheim's daughter, he struggled to find his place on the Paris scene, but came up with a new form of figuration via a range of styles and subjects: the nude (*Nu renversé*, 1946), the landscape (*Le Grand Brabant*, 1957), the still life (*Nature morte à la citrouille*, 1946 and *Citrouilleries*, 1952), allegory (*À rebours*, 1947, *Jugement dernier des choses*, 1978–79), history painting (*Choses vues en mai*, 1969) and studio views (*L'atelier*, 1953 recently acquired by MAM with the aid of the Amis du Musée d'Art Moderne and the Fonds du Patrimoine). Paris, street life and minglings of dream elements proved an inexhaustible source for his "prose of the world".

Late in life, with his sight failing, his work became a deliberate miscellany of the motifs that had always haunted him. His painting oscillated between derision and gravity (*Le Peintre piétiné par son modèle*, 1983) and between dreams and joyful dazzlement.

The exhibition catalogue has been edited by the curators, Sophie Krebs and Henry Claude Cousseau, with a preface by Fabrice Hergott and contributions by Vincent Broqua, Pierre Brullé, Éric de Chasse, Céline Chicha-Castex, Oliver Koerner Von Gustorf, Brigitte Léal, Guitemie Maldonado, François-René Martin and Emmanuel Pernoud.

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