

L'Art et La Vie: Show of March 27, 1952 "La Fontaine's Fables Illustrated by Chagall"

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Georges Charensol: We'll ask Marc Chagall himself to present his series of illustrations for La Fontaine's *Fables*, which are currently on display at the Galerie Maeght. My dear Chagall, is it true that Vollard, twenty years ago, was the one who commissioned this series of illustrations?

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Marc Chagall: He [Vollard] first thought of doing colored lithographs in the style of the seventeenth or eighteenth century. I made 100 gouaches, 100 watercolors, intending to reproduce them in etchings. He founded studios, with a Rome Prize, and so on. We conducted research, heaps of proofs but nothing came of it. There were too many colors. And when Bernheim asked him for a loan to exhibit the collection, he [Vollard] didn't want to because he didn't want it to be on display. He liked possessing it. Oh yes, he had that gift: he liked to own things. And once it was shown to someone, that was it. Over. And when I asked him to provide them for the exhibition, he said, "Well then I'd rather sell them all." And they were all on display and all sold the same day, all 100 of them [gouaches]. I started etching again. La Fontaine is now at Maeght, you see. After 25 years, after the war, after the liberation, after that whole nightmare, when I thought the copper plates had been sent off "for canons" and the etchings were being sold on the Quai de Saint-Michel, I thought with my daughter, how can I save them? How can I liberate them and how can I finish them? How can I get them published? I'm not a publisher. There were dozens of them. I chose Tériade, the director of this splendid Verve edition and the other magnificent books. I chose him. I gave all of it to him.

00:01:58

Georges Charensol: Thank you my dear Chagall, and I'm happy to have this chance to congratulate you for the huge success you just experienced at your exhibition in the Musée de Nice. The curator of this museum, Mrs. Guinet, is among us and I believe she has prepared a vast Renoir exhibition to follow your collection.