

HUBERTY
& BREYNE

Michel CRESPIN

Rétrospective

7.06
> 20.07.2024

PARIS | Matignon

36 avenue Matignon,
Paris 8^e



Marseille - Armalite - 16 - Tome 0 (détail)

Michel Crespin (1955-2001) enjoyed a meteoric career. His first cartoons appeared in 1977 in the pages of the iconic science fiction magazine *Métal Hurlant*, where he soon made a name for himself as the author of darkly post-apocalyptic stories drawing on two things he knew well – mountains and solitude. A naturally reserved artist, whose home was in the heart of the French Alps, Crespin created a number of standout albums, including his big *Armalite 16* saga, recently re-published by Humanoides Associés. He followed this with the historical *Troubadour* series and with *Faust*, two delicately drawn fables about human nature in which he foregrounded the use of colour. And, finally, in 2008 Futuropolis published the posthumous *Villa Toscane*, a dark story originally created for Lombard's "Histoire & Légende" collection. In agreement with Crespin's family, Huberty & Breyne will be showing a selection of original pages from these albums at its 36 avenue Matignon gallery from 7 June to 20 July 2024.

Crespin was something of a dreamer, a man of few words, reserved but charming. What is so surprising about his work is that it channelled new ideas that are more than ever relevant in today's world. Crespin focuses intently on

human nature and the angst to which human beings are prone, highlighting subtlety and ambivalence, and the importance, or otherwise, of our place in the natural environment. While championing certain ideals, he remains clear about society's shortcomings. And, in graphic terms, Michel Crespin is constantly looking for new ways of expressing his ideas. Influenced perhaps by the location of his studio – in the heart of the mountains – he plays with the effects of the light. When he works in black and white, he succeeds in creating a fragile balance between the drawn line – executed with surprising delicacy – and the flat areas of his image, the hatching and the mechanical effects. He experiments constantly, takes infinite care over his lettering (a characteristic feature of his work), composes and recomposes. In his drawings in direct colour, the reds and blues are pure, with darker tones sometimes substituted for the drawn line, the whole skilfully combined and involving subtle shifts in density. There is a real pleasure to be had from seeing original pages by Michel Crespin framed on the gallery wall. Isolated from the narrative to which they contributed, these images speak to us as unique objects functioning in their own right.



Marseille - Armalite 16 - Les infernets - Tome 4

Biographie

Michel Crespin was born in Gap, in the Hautes-Alpes, a department in south-eastern France, on 28 April 1955. He spent his childhood and adolescence in St Bonnet en Champsaur, then left his native valley for Nice, where he spent two years studying at the School of Decorative Arts before setting himself the challenge of a career in comics... for which purpose he returned to the mountains. The challenge was successfully met and Crespin would continue to tell his "histoires dessinées" up until his death on 14 February 2001.

A great walker (with a preference for sandals), Crespin tramped back and forth over his beloved mountains, taking paths less trodden and drawing inspiration from what he saw, revisiting in watercolour places familiar to him since childhood and drawing from his surroundings characters he would endow with epic destinies. All his life, Crespin enjoyed the solitude and the open spaces that were to prove imperative to his creativity, and he felt the need constantly to immerse himself in the landscapes that had formed him.

His legacy to his children and those who knew him comprised his graphic work of course but also his humanist values and sensitivity to the world around him, as well as a complete refusal to compromise – all of which were recurring themes throughout his life.

After publishing work in the pages of *Métal Hurlant*, Crespin brought out his first comics album in 1979 with Humanoides Associés. This was *Marseil*, the first volume in the Armalite 16 series, which would run to four albums (all with the same publisher). Set in the Hautes-Alpes mountains in a post-atomic age, these albums tell the story of a group of young mountain-dwellers and of their efforts to resist a totalitarian invader.

The series was followed by *Attentes*, a collection of short stories (from the same publisher) in which Crespin depicts the waywardness of a modern world that is both predatory and pragmatic, imperilling both humanity and the natural environment.

In 1991, Crespin, who described himself as a "raconteur d'histoires dessinées" ("someone who tells stories in pictures"), began exploring the Middle Ages with Troubadour, a series in three "strands", published by Vent d'Ouest. Here again we find his favourite themes: against a backdrop of fratricidal struggles, we witness the transition from an old order, where nature imparted her secrets to an attentive humankind, to a new one – deaf and brutal and obsessed with temporal power.

Still with Vent d'Ouest, but in collaboration (for the first time) with another writer, Karel Dhoyen, Crespin published the first

volume in the *Faust d'Heidelberg* series, *Le Remords de Dieu*, the second volume, *L'Étudiant*, coming out with Casterman.

In 1996, Casterman brought out *Élie*, the manga first published in Japan by Kodansha. Drawn in black and white and depicting a world where nature has more to say than humans, *Élie* takes its inspiration from childhood: drawing on his daily observations of his own children in their Champsaur village, Crespin recreates a world of dreams and sorrows intermingled with his own memories and where solitude, the cradle of a sensitive nature, encourages a familiarity with rock and water, snow and light. *Élie* is a homage to nature and to childhood and evokes that first loss of innocence in a child's interaction with the adult world.

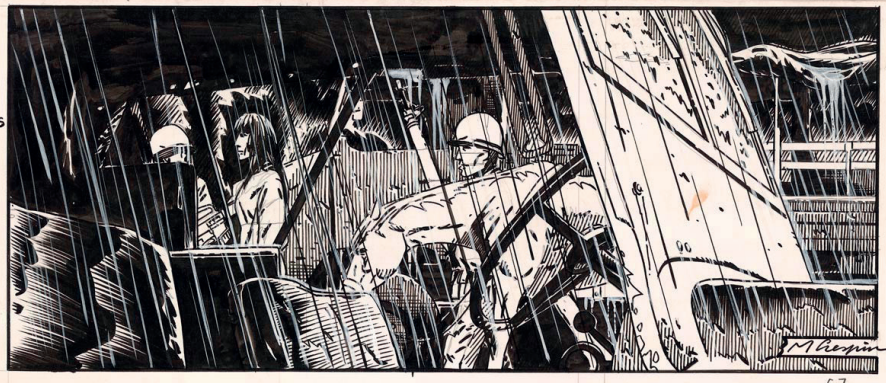
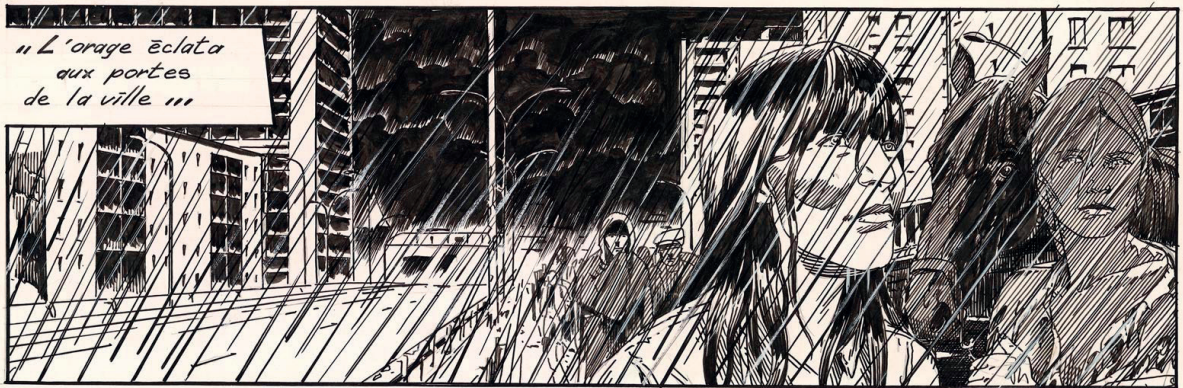
Alongside his other publications, Crespin illustrated texts for "Je Bouquine" and children's books by Eric Boisset published by Magnard. He also contributed to several collective works – anti-nuclear projects, projects for Greenpeace and Amnesty International, projects in support of ex-inmates, the Innu people, and inner-city children, and of course in defence of his native region and its mountains.

Crespin won prizes at the festivals of Angoulême, Audincourt, Saint-Malo, Pertuis and Blois, where his work was also exhibited.

A project he was working on for Éditions Dargaud with his friend the journalist and comics writer Laurence Harlé – *Ruisseau de sable* – remained unfinished. Eager to immerse himself, as always, in the landscape that would serve as a setting for this particular story, Crespin had travelled to the United States to track down the descendants of the few Cheyenne Indians who survived the massacre at Colorado's Sand Creek.

From October 2001, he was also artist in residence in La Motte-du-Caire (Alpes de Haute-Provence), where he was working on the "Le Sentier des Contes" project, "La route des rochers qui parlent".

The album *Villa Toscane* (story by Greg Newman-Philippe Aubert, drawing and colours by Michel Crespin) was published posthumously, in October 2008, by Futuropolis. Initially commissioned by Éditions du Lombard in 1992 for its "Histoire & Légende" collection, which ceased publication meanwhile, the finished story had been hanging around in Michel Crespin's studio. All the illustrations were discovered when a retrospective exhibition devoted to the artist was held in Angers and, as a result, the album finally saw the light of day.



Chapitre 3

Bibliographie

Comic book albums

Editions Humanoïdes Associés

- *Marseil* (1979)
- *Armalite 16* (1980)
- *Lune Blanche* (1981)
- *Attentes* (1982)
- *Dorianne* (1985)
- *Les Infernets* (1987)

Editions Vents d'Ouest

- *Troubadour - premier brin* (1991)
- *Troubadour - second brin* (1992)
- *Troubadour - troisième brin* (1993)
- *Faust - Le remords de Dieu* (1995), script by Karel Doyen

Editions Casterman

- *Faust d'Heidelberg - L'étudiant* (1998), scénario K. Doyen
- *Elie* (1996), manga published in Japan by Kodansha

Editions les 2 coqs d'Or

- *L'Evangile de Marc* (1996)

Editions Futuropolis

- *Villa Toscane* (2008), scénario Greg Newman - published posthumously

Illustrations

Editions Bayard Presse

- *En fuite*, coll. Je Bouquine (1990), story by M. Boulaire

Editions Magnard

- *Arkandias*, 3 tomes (1996-1998)
- *Nicos Tratos* (1999)

Ouvrages collectifs

- *Zodiaques* (1983)
- *Le désert est plus beau que tout* (1987)
- *Au secours* (1994)
- *Tutti Frutti* (1995)
- *Sixty Blocs* (1996)
- *Paroles de taulards* (1999)
- *Innuat- en quête de mémoires* (2000)

For the Office Intercommunal de la Motte Turriers

- Three stories written and illustrated for:
- *Le sentier des Contes* (2000)
 - *Itinérances Médiévales Médiévales* (book) with illustrations



Faust d'heidelberg - L'étudiant - Tome 2 (détail)

Michel CRESPIN

Rétrospective

OPENING

Thursday 6 June 2024 from 6pm to 9pm

EXHIBITION

From Friday 7 June 2024
to Saturday 20 July 2024

PARIS | Matignon

36 avenue Matignon
Mardi > Samedi 11h – 19h

CONTACT PRESSE

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HD visuals available on request
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HUBERTY & BREYNE

Huberty & Breyne is a contemporary art gallery specialising in original cartoon work. Operating out of Brussels and Paris under the direction of Alain Huberty and Marc Breyne, the gallery – which has been in existence for almost 30 years – represents both established and up-and-coming artists linked to, or inspired by, the 9th art.

Its exhibitions of original plates, paintings and sculptures champion contemporary art in all its guises and provide a platform for the crossover of different disciplines. A key reference point in the world of comic art, the Huberty & Breyne gallery offers collectors a rigorous selection of works by both household names and promising newcomers.

The gallery is closely involved with the contemporary art market scene and a contributor at major international fairs such as Brafa (Brussels Antiques & Fine Arts Fair), 1 – 54 London, Art Paris and Drawing Now. It occupies a 1,000m² exhibition space in Brussels, in place du Châtelain, and two further exhibition spaces in Paris, in avenue Matignon and rue Chapon.

Aside from running the gallery, Alain Huberty and Marc Breyne also advise auction houses regarding the sale of works of comic art.

BRUXELLES | Châtelain

33 place du Châtelain
1050 Bruxelles
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Wednesday > Saturday
11.00 am – 7.00 pm

PARIS | Matignon

36 avenue Matignon
75008 Paris
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Tuesday > Saturday
11.00 am – 7.00 pm

PARIS | Chapon

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