

# RICHARD SALTOUN

## The Temptations of Pierre Molinier

Exhibition dates: 20 August – 2 October, 2015

*At all times, my acts and my actions in life have stemmed from love or eroticism, as you like it (Pierre Molinier, The Shaman and its Creatures)*

Richard Saltoun Gallery is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of the career and unorthodox life of French Surrealist artist Pierre Molinier (b. 1900, Agen - 1976, Bordeaux).

Pierre Molinier – the man and the painter, the genius and the pervert, the ‘lesbienne’ and the guns lover – is not an easy figure to pin down. Existing on the margins of conventional society, he lived a life defined by excess and hedonism. At the age of 50 he raised his ‘premature tomb’, reading on its cross: ‘Here lies Pierre Molinier - born on 13 April 1900 - died around 1950 - He was a man without morals - He didn’t give a f\*\*\* of glory and honour - Useless to pray for him.’

This exhibition presents a selection of more than 50 of his groundbreaking photographs, drawings and paintings, dating from 1952 onwards. It was at this time that Molinier moved towards a more ‘magical’ style of art, a style that sought to bring to the surface unconscious desires and erotic drives and subsequently captured the attention of André Bréton, the founder of Surrealism. Bréton became an avid supporter of his work and organised Molinier’s first exhibition *L’Étoile Scellée*, in 1956, which established his reputation.

Molinier’s fascination with the body and the erotic manifested itself through his carefully staged photographic portraits and self-portraits. Whilst his paintings and drawings depicted female characters in vertiginous, dark backgrounds, in his photographs he adopted a more joyful approach, reshaping his and his model’s appearances through doll’s masks, clothing, accessories, and S&M paraphernalia. Cross-dressing was, for Molinier, the preferred method of reshaping his own appearance, and this exhibition will present a collection of these self-portraits.

Molinier’s creative process was both strict and experimental: he would mix colour pigments with his sperm; he only used as models the people whom he loved; he would fellate himself whilst releasing the camera’s shutter; he would have sex with the dolls he was using for his shootings; hand-sew and alter female undergarments to fit his body; alter photographs by manually manipulating the negatives using his body parts.

Photography was a way for Molinier to present the pleasure principle and allowed him to give visual form to infinite dream-like creatures that made their way forward from his inner psyche. ‘The Shaman and its Creatures’, an unfinished artist’s book from 1967, composed of over 70 photomontages, epitomises the artist’s role as a demiurge: between God and Satan. The Shaman Pierre Molinier is an intermediary figure that opens the doors to inconceivable visions, by altering, disassembling and multiplying the body and its gender. The photomontage technique allowed for such experiments, and was perfected by Molinier, by cutting, composing and photographing the constructed montage.

Pierre Molinier’s life and art are inseparable and, in 1976, he committed suicide by a self-inflicted gunshot. A retrospective at Centre Georges Pompidou was held the following year.

**Biography:**

Born in Agen, France, in 1900, Pierre Molinier started his career as a house painter. In his twenties he moved with his family to the city of Bordeaux, where he joined a secret esoteric society. A fervent promoter of the arts and of the 'Salons', in the 50s he abandoned his job in order to dedicate himself exclusively to his art. Molinier produced Surrealist paintings as well hundreds of photographs, that have been inspirational for the generations of performance and body-based artists (such as Robert Mapplethorpe and Cindy Sherman) that followed.

Solo exhibitions include: L'Etoile Scelée, (1956, Paris), Centre Georges Pompidou (1979, Paris), Malmö Konsthall (1980, Malmö), Australian Center for Photography (1994, Sydney), Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (1994, Berlin), Santa Monica Museum of Art (1998, Santa Monica), IVAM (1999, Valencia).

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**Visitor Information** - Richard Saltoun Gallery

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**Gallery Hours:** Monday to Friday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm or by appointment

**Nearest tube:** Oxford Circus and Great Portland Street.