

Sylvie Lelievre Botton
Graduate of the “Ecole Normale Supérieure”
Aggregation in Philosophy
Designer of the web: Philophil.com

« To do one's best, without worrying about time »

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A LIFE OF PAINTING

The Child from Montreuil

My grandfather was born in 1908. Horses have always fascinated him. Native of Montreuil-sur-Mer, he tells us how, as a little boy, he used to run away from the paved courtyard of the Hotel de France (property of his great grandmother, on his mother's side, Léocadie Legrand), to watch foals, mares and Boulonnais gathered together for sale at the cattle market of the Grand Place.

The Hotel de France of Montreuil-sur-Mer, today a historical monument, is an old building which was built in 1578. Its name comes from the fact that the King's Court used it as a stopover inn, and became during the nineteenth century a post station. A get-together place for painters from British and American institutions, during their tour of Europe. My grandfather loves to talk about « headquarters ». Montreuil-sur-Mer is a fortified town whose imposing walls, and steep narrow streets, attract the painter's eye. A century earlier, novelist Lawrence Sterne in his *Voyage Sentimental en France et en Italie* (1768), pointed out Montreuil's beggars: this colorful population always intrigued the traveler since misery, cheeky humor and mischievous prank were combined in its people.

The painters got into the habit of staying at the Hotel de France for several months. Despite the two wars and the exodus, my family succeeded in saving a few paintings of these masters of the past: *La Cavée Saint-Firmin* d'Albert Gihon (another version belongs to the Luxembourg Museum), but also *Les Moulins de la Canche* and *Le Village de la Madeleine*, where Eugene Lelievre's maternal great-grandfather, judge Edouard Legrand, was pictured with his farmers who were supplying the Hotel de France. A small watercolor, that my grandfather esteemed very much, depicts the old Léocadie sitting in her kitchen, around what seems to be the same large table as the one that nowadays welcomes tourists from all nationalities, in this odd place that is the Hotel de France.

Facing the inner courtyard of the hotel, in the "rue du Petit Cocquempot", lived a horse breeder "étalonnier" who displayed the powerful muscles of his work instrument. (At

that time, this was the name given to the man who looked after the good progress of the mares covered by his stallion).

Since age four, little Eugene spit on the ground to draw from life, in the dust, the horse's movements. The sketched forms had volume. Nothing to see with the usual "gee-gee's" drawn by children; at least so believed those foreign painters, sketchbook in hand, whose activity the child probably reproduced.

In 1912, the Hotel de France was sold to Monsieur Reisenleiter, the cook. Jeanne, Eugene's mother, decided to settle down in Lille with her two children. Being a widow since less than two years, after the birth of her son, she was one of those few women of that time who, having benefited from an instruction made it possible to successfully pass the entrance exam at the French Postal Services. This is where she had met her husband, Gaëtan Lelièvre, who was also a Postal inspector in Bergues. A handsome man, multidisciplinary athlete and talented draughtsman, Gaëtan died when he was thirty three years old, after a soccer game, from what was called at the time a "hot and cold". About his father, Eugene only knew what the family legend said about him: "The best and softest man who ever existed". Among his ascendants we find, in the Lelièvre branch, several painters and some military men.

From the window in Lille, the show of the First World War

By leaving the Hotel de France and moving to Lille, Jeanne wanted to be closer to her brother, Eugene Zorninger. Having completed his chemistry studies, thanks to the financial support of his brother in law, he was working as an engineer at the Kuhlmann factory of Marquette-les-Lilles. During Gaëtan's life, a deep friendship bound the two men, hence the choice of the name "Eugene" for his son.

Just while leaving the station, Eugene who was in his fourth year, remembers being fascinated by a window display showing lead soldiers in diorama sceneries. He also evokes a splendid hot air balloon, which overhung the whole...

Occupying a tiny ground level flat, overlooking the courtyard, Eugene plays being tsar...! His sister Suzanne (being four years older) transforms herself into a highness by the grace of an old apron while she puts a tin bucket on her younger brothers' head, to serve as a war helmet; purist, she wishes to place under his chin the bucket handle as a chinstrap... The doctor was called to free Eugene's jaws from the wired handle! Is it this episode which later brings Eugene to make, of its own hands, figurine soldiers wearing uniforms with perfect accuracy in the finishing? 199 in total (40 cavalymen and 159 infantrymen) all lovingly dressed up in uniform with the help of Yvonne -his wife - (also known as Von), a dress maker. She soon became an expert in piping embroidery, insignias and miniature trimmings... I like to think that those figurines which are now in many private collections and Canadian museums are the ghosts of the little boy, struggling with the wired bucket handle and screaming out his helplessness. As to the hot air balloon seen on the first day of his arrival in Lille, it had a great future, thanks to the order of Malcolm Forbes, who bought 8 dioramas for his collection at the Balloon Museum of the Chateau de Balleroy.

But the career of Eugene had probably another event founder.

Germany declared war and Uncle Eugene was sent to Algeria to organize a production unit of explosives.... Such is the nonsense of the technological conflicts, where wealth and science, combined to serve the worst, tear apart families and increase the damages which are affecting already human beings.

The Great War devastated north of France. Barricades increased at the gates of Lille to hamper the progress of the German infantry. My grand father recalls the boots and arms of German soldiers which emerged from the mess of stacked up furniture, and finally overturn the obstacle. Eugene totally lost his hearing when he was 32 years old, during World War Two, but he still hear the crashes of the grapeshot, the explosion of the powder factory but also the blast of the eighteen bridges which deeply impressed his childhood senses. His eyes still see French infantrymen tumbling down the battlements!

Gathered safely on the second floor of a small apartment of the rue Bapaume, while their mother is out for supplies, Eugene, now six years old and the fearless Suzanne, ten years, witness a charge from the French cavalry against the German infantry: blue breastplates, red pants, with drawn swords...

There, a little below them, under their stunned eyes, a horse slips on the pavement and collapses with all his weight, booting out its rider-and all his gear- in a deafening noise which will forever echo in the old man's mind...

It is that first drawing he sold, for three francs, when he was 7 years old (in 1915). Never has he been so proud, than that day!

This modest window of the rue de Bapaume was for him the starting point which undoubtedly decided of his vocation of equestrian painter, well-known specialist of the Ancient Régime uniforms. Often, indeed, Eugene's paintings of battles are painted according to this "isometric projection": the glance is carried above the fray... However, let us not go too fast: the kid is not yet ten years old, it is orphan of father, and war is raging...

My grandfather also remembers seeing the endless march of the German troops, after the French pullback, with, at the end of the cortege, those unusual scenes: Moroccan Gourmier's wives, squatting on the kits, who were loading their mules. Later on, the readings of Kipling, Corwood, Tolstoy, and Slimar ben Ibrahim (illustrated by Etienne Dinet) will be mixed together with the memories of this French retreat.

On several occasions, in his military paintings, my grandfather will become the witness of colonial soldiers, sent to die miles away from their homes, just like his son, Jacques- my father-, who was sent during the Algerian war to Fes (Morocco) first for 6 months, than to Alger and finally to the Constantinois. Furthermore, a painting which he gave him as a gift shows a scene in the Vosges, during the winter of 1944, displaying horse riding Moroccan Goumier's, at walk, crossing French tanks. This staggering gap does not cancel anything of the bravery of the cavalrymen who became soldiers.

Poverty and exodus

As it always is during occupation times, life was not simple. The hardware store Ledieu hired Eugene's mother as a bookkeeper, but her pay was scanty. Suzanne and her brother went to pick up lime-tree leaves at the Victor Hugo Boulevard, and during the evening prepared little tea bags which they sold the next day, on the sly, to earn some extra money along with candles that their mother managed to divert.

In 1917, famine prevailed in Lille. Authorities imposed exodus. Children under fifteen and women were put in to livestock wagons and deported to Belgium. My grandfather's convoy disembarked in the Belgian Ardennes, at Stavelot: they spent eight days parked in filthy overcrowded conditions only to get 250 km ahead... It wasn't death at the end. Horror knew worst. However, from this ordeal, Eugene kept a fear for traveling and moving.

For an entire year, the family stayed as workforce at Mr. Laurent's farm in Stavelot. They remained friends after the war. Little Eugene led the cows to the meadow and became godfather to the first-born calf he witnessed. Suzanne kept such a warm memory from this simple and tough life that she decided to go back to the farm for her honeymoon. During the exodus Jeanne and her children were quite lucky. However, Eugene who always had lived before the war in the cozy atmosphere of a middle-class family, despite the death of his father, encountered between the ages of seven and ten, poverty and humiliations. Accustomed to fine leather shoes, the wooden clogs would slash through his skin.

Eugene caught typhoid, without a doubt while playing in the swamps, catching the cockchafers with the little brats of the village. Eugene spent several weeks at the hospital, and nearly missed the repatriation convoys. The German thick and rough green felt outfit, imposed by the sanitary service for his return to France, was a bitter humiliation for Eugene.

Boarding house for military men in Orleans

Sometime before the armistice of November 11, 1918, Jeanne, who had lost everything after the exodus of one year in Belgium, was hoping to take refuge at her younger sister's house in Orleans (I've always heard her named as "Tante Mimi"). Since 1910, her sister lived, rue de Gourville, in a nice town house. A replica of the Belfort Lion was sitting prominently in the main courtyard.

Uncle Marius, weird and having an authoritarian character, lawyer at his lost times and actor most of the time, was also a painter, a musician² and a writer³. He transformed the large shed next to the carriage into a studio, not far from the trough and the large climbing vine.

On the last floor of the main building, the maids' rooms, where Jeanne and her children were settling in – opened on a vast attic: several trunks in wicker were filled up with

¹ Two letters signed by the composer Jules Massenet (1842-1912) a little time before his death in which he praises the « the natural, the feelings, and the true story of the compositions of Marius Machin.

² I found in the family library, a collection of tales written by Marius Machin, which was printed and published at Montreuil-sur-Mer in 1907 by Charles Delambre: *Devant les chenets*. At the reading of the first two tales, one could think it is a novelized catechism which the ingenuous moralist of the four following stories doesn't contradict; one of which is a timid tribute to his own engagement at Guînes in 1905. Half way through the book, the tale entitled *Les Murailles de Théroutanne* leads us to a whole different world: in the five following pamphlets, the tone becomes scathing and the storybook ends in a satire of the sacrosanct end of the year award ceremony.

Presumably Marius Machin was trying to trap of their own idleness the parents who neglect to read until the end the moral books that they give to their children.

stage costumes... It was for Eugene, Suzanne and their cousin a fantastic play area. After a few dirty tricks the two boys got along, and started loving each other as brothers.

The lawyer's office occupied part of the ground floor, and the three floors were divided into several apartments which were rented to retired officers who came to Orleans to get specialized in aviation or artillery. Boarding house and "table d'hôte", the stay at rue de Gourville was for Eugene a chance to meet many military characters : the Baron de Fougères, a regular one who rather would have dinner with the youth in the kitchen, but also the very serious son of Joseph Bédier, the Academician, the second lieutenant of the Ferté Senectère, youngest boy of the castle of the Ferté, in Sologne, or this young Japanese captain, also a painter, who remained a long time a friend of the family.. M. Teichi Yohimoto was to become governor of the province. Brave as traditionally samurais are, he committed suicide soon after the Hiroshima disaster.

But let's not anticipate on future war horrors... It is the armistice of 1918 and Jeanne, Eugene's mother, is hoping to find, along with peace, a little comfort at her younger sister's home, who got married into a very good family and had always been raised like a princess!

Eugene's grandmother, Esther Zorninger - who never had been very affectionate with her eldest daughter - had pampered her second one and cherished for her great social ambitions. Esther, as well as her daughter Mimi, had been conquered by the noble-looking of Marius Machin. Trustful, it is on its own funds that the private mansion had been bought. She lived there permanently and took care of the boarding house.

In October 1918, when Jeanne wanted to return to her mother and sister's house in Orleans, Marius and his good looks had accumulated debts: bankruptcy was close. They divorced in 1919.

Furious, Aunt Mimi damaged all the portraits, sketches, and compliments which the artists of the Hotel de France of Montreuil had given her for the wedding celebration. Soon, it was necessary to sell the private mansion in Orleans. The grandmother entrusted to the best friend of her youngest daughter the invaluable curios that one tried to withdrawn to the bailiff. The old lady did not survive what was the ruin of her dream, and was buried in Orleans.

Shaken, the two sisters left with their children to spend the summer of 1919 in Berck, where their uncle, Louis Legrand, on their mother side, was in charge of the casino. Jeanne and Mimi rented an apartment, 8 rue des Bains. Uncle Louis made rediscover to the children the ocean's beauty, the blue immensity, the clarity of the beaches at rising sun, and also the magic of the color variations ... This majesty of light increased the sad reality of the carriages pulling along the seashore, close to the water, sick young children who came to breathe the iodine sprays, in conformity with the medical discoveries of the time.

On his side, Lieutenant Teichi Yosimoto, left for maneuvers in Briançon. Because of his great affection for the boarding house in Orleans, and his genuine friendliness for this family, he asked Jeanne to remain as his housekeeper, at his return. In Orleans, Jeanne took, at the Cloître St Pierre, an apartment on the ground floor in a very quiet street. One day, however, my grandfather remembers having seen at the window of the room of the officer, a hand furtively stretched out to take the jacket he had left to air out on the guardrail. The Lieutenant gripped rather harshly the hand of the robber, and let it escape in a great burst of laughter!

The hackneys in Paris

After his training was over in Briançon and Orleans, the Japanese Lieutenant had to stay now for two years at the War School of Paris (1920-1922). Jeanne rented a furnished apartment for her lodger; rue d'Ouessant in the Motte Picquet area, in Paris. Eugene helped the young man to improve his French, and Suzanne, who had taken shorthand lessons in Orleans, became his secretary. Tante Mimi became the housekeeper of another Japanese officer, M. Hasimoto, a friend who was in the same class as M. Yosimoto. She lived with her son Gilbert, not far from there.

Kindhearted, M. Yosimoto treated Eugene with long rides on horse carriages all through Paris. He offered him tickets to horse shows at the Grand Palais, to polo games and to dog shows. At the secondhand booksellers, Tieshi Yosimoto bought Eugene all the pictures he liked. The 15-year-old teenager had found a patron who was only a few years older than himself! For Eugene, Paris was to be discovered with a smile on his lips.

On her side, Aunt Mimi, waited forever the invaluable curios she had left in Orleans... Later on, one realized that the wife's "best friend" was nobody else than the husband's mistress!

Marius's son, who was named after his father, changed his name and became Gilbert, a turbulent child, confused, dunce at school until he found out a passion for aviation. Pilot at 20 of the planes connecting Paris to Alicante, he seemed to have found in the audacity of the take-off the revenge for the larceny his family was betrayed. He died, not long before his wedding, victim of a cerebral accident that no one was able to cure.

Thus Eugene grew, from removals to removals, in a family universe governed by women, where painters and soldiers crossed each other incidentally. It is with his mother's support that he was able to develop his skills. Whereas, obviously, the serious and honorable draftsman's career opened for the young Eugene at the railroad company (he was a very good student), his mother Jeanne, not only she didn't discourage his artistic calling, but even more she sought the masters able to favor that impulse which pushed Eugene, when he was just a little boy, to draw and paint horses.

Choosing his masters

In Paris, Eugene spent every Thursday afternoon at the Invalides, in the Edouard Detaille room. He becomes immersed in the art collections and is an avid reader of the library. Today still, through his concern for detail and the mechanism of the movements, Eugene considers himself as a student of Detaille. The logic of the filiations is more flexible than the strict chronology. Besides, Eugene shares with this famous predecessor the ability to create copies of antique accessories: postillons, boots, shako...

Edouard Detaille (1848-1912), has been Louis Ernest Meissonier's (1815-1891) student, a specialist in painting military subjects, who was filled with honors by Napoleon III. With a few friends, all fascinated by the history of the armies, the two artists had been the founders of *La Sabretache*, which is a company of collectors of military items and illustrations, founded in 1891, of which the purpose was to obtain from the military authorities the authorization to create the "Musée de l'Armée".

They reached their objective in 1905, when the Artillery Museum situated at the Invalides since the defeat of 1870 joined them. Was it this long story which intrigued young Eugene, as he paced up and down the collection halls? The orphan was searching for his peers; the cavalry painter loves the beauty of the military parades.

At closing time, Eugene goes along the banks, he is hunting the secondhand booksellers and returns home, rue d'Ouessant, in a roundabout way. This is how, one evening, he discovers two small reproductions of Georges Busson's watercolors, nicely framed. The name doesn't mean much to him yet. He is then far from suspecting that five years later he will be his student and twenty years after he will also work for the Advertising Agency Sirven, which had edited these prints, cut again and framed very carefully by the secondhand dealer.

Another evening, in the neighborhood of la Motte-Piquet, Eugene will try to cut out the head of a horse of a poster of the same painter. A police man stopped him, but in front of Eugene's enthusiasm and his frankness in his confession, it was the sergeant who ended up by cutting out the poster to give it to the young man while specifying to him that *"This should never be done!"*

At the high school of la Place du Commerce, Eugene's drawing teacher, Father Renaud is also an artist who dares to invite his best students at his studio rue Bonaparte.

In 1920, he introduces Eugene at a contest of the town of Paris, which is held every year at the Jardin du Luxembourg. His student wins a grant of 50 francs together with a book magnificently bound, but alas about architecture and not on horses: clumsiness of the institutions!

Is this the reason why Eugene's mother didn't ask his schoolteacher when searching for a master to assure her son's artistic education? Perhaps she feared for the confined atmosphere in the school universe.

Jeanne asked her uncle, Louis Legrand, manager at the Casino in Berck, to find some addresses where to train Eugene who was just 16. The Casino of Berck, at that time had already a showroom and cinematographic projections, was maybe for Jeanne, an indication of modernity within creativity. The first address, given by his provincial uncle, was located in the Opera neighborhood; it was an interior designer who didn't know anything about horses... The second one, in Montmartre, was drawn aside by the glaucous feeling of vice which prevailed in the street. Eugene's mother was a bit disappointed when she reached number 54, rue Lepic, the last address...

When the door opens, a large fresco of horses stands on the floor; she knows she has found what she is looking for. Eugene Lelievre will spend 25 years in M. Saint-George's studio, an Italian immigrant whose real name was "Gio". He was himself a student of Jean-Leon Gerome (1824-1904), a great orientalist, professor at the Beaux Arts in Paris. It is in this filiation that Eugene learns the basis of his profession...

In the basement of the apartment of Montrouge, which my grandfather currently occupies, there is a large paper roller which is the exact copy of this equestrian fresco, without which Eugene's path might not have been the same one...

M. Saint-Georges has many contacts in the States, who order him decorative panels. The young Eugene starts by carrying out many painting of clouds, intended to decorate the ceilings. An aged painter, -of whom my grandfather has forgotten the name-, will

give the final touch by adding a few brush strokes. He is also a former student of the painter Gerome. For Eugene, he is a man of sound advice.

During the summer, Eugene spent the entire two months vacation at his rich uncle's villa. Upon his return from mission in Algeria, Eugene Zorninger, became Director of the Kuhlmann factories in France and lived in a splendid house, leased by the factory in Madeleine-Les-Lilles, and then in Loos, and finally he ended his career in Paris. Cook, gardener and gamekeeper welcomed Eugene as the child of the family. A sketchbook from that time shows the park and the under woods of the house in Madeleine-Les-Lilles, as well as the house in Loos: the Belgian sheepdog Sultana, in love with the gardener, appears there with Pierrot, a sheepdog from Flanders, in the niche where Eugene took refuge, as a child, running away the society life to which his aunt wanted him to get used to ... Besides, he will refuse always to kiss a woman's hand...

Uncle Eugene and Aunt Celine (called Aunt "Nini") would have gladly adopted Eugene, so that he could take lessons at the Beaux Arts in Lille. But, in 1920, during the first month of study, the mess and foolishness of the hazing are too much contrary with the serious, modest and respectful nature of the young painter. He prefers to seek, in work and direct contact with the artists, the Masters whom he will choose – quite apart from the fact that at the Beaux Arts he drew plasters, whereas at M. Saint-Georges' studio, female models pose naked!

On July 13th 1923, a day which is not really a normal one since it is his name day, he discovers at the front window of the art gallery Hénéaut, place des Pyramides, an entire collection of Francisque Rebour's paintings, one representing a young female rider jumping over hurdles in the forest. Filled with admiration, the young man is fascinated by the drawing lines, and once at home, he tries to reproduce the reality. His sister Suzanne, his lifetime friend, flushes the address of the painter, and insists that her brother dares, finally present his paintings to this master. But Eugene is shy, and will always be. It is Suzanne who offers to act as mediator.

Francisque Rebour knows a lot about horses: his father reared them. His pencil strokes are energetic and daring. On a regular basis, from September 1923 to March 1925 he opens his studio to Eugene –who works during the week for M. Saint-Georges as an apprentice. Luckily, M. Rebour's large studio, place du Tertre, was only 200 meters away from the studio of rue Lepic. The Master taught Eugene the essentials of the horse anatomy as well as the movement mechanisms. It is always with emotion that my grandfather shows to his own students, the file in which his first drawings corrected by Francisque Rebour are precious kept. Everything was used as support because the family was not rich, and the drawing paper was expensive. Draft after draft, pencil or gouache, the forms seem to mature, the attitudes of the horses become more natural. With the corrections of Francisque Rebour on Eugene's drawings, blunders became obvious for the young man. When he went to horse races, he knew where to look at for improvement. One afternoon, with a deep smile, M. Rebour fixed Eugene and pronounced these words full with reserve and irony: *"I can't do anything more for you!"*

Francisque Rebour advised Eugene to present his creations to Georges Busson *"But don't tell him about me!"* he added. Between the two artists, a certain form of cold respect remained. M. Rebour, survivor of the Great War, had kept heavy after-effects from those times. In his studio, where once in a while a few visitors were invited, a severe soberness reigned. A gigantic fresco showed human skeletons sitting astride stallions, facing the bare bust of a woman (which looked similar to the young servant who sometimes popped

into the room). All related to the ephemeral life, the proximity of the death which overlaps the pleasure... and the fatal outcome of the races to glory.

M. Georges Busson, older than Francisque Rebour, had been spared by the war. In his luxurious studio, 33, rue Bayen, the “cream of the society” gathered. Georges Busson had known another Leliepvre, landscape painter, whose name was Johan. “*Are you relatives?*” – Eugene confessed he didn’t know, maybe a cousin: the name Leliepvre, written with a p, was quite unusual in the Flanders.

During two years, Eugene presented regularly his watercolors and his paintings, listening to this man and his powerful words. This is the place where Eugene learned the precision in the skeleton’s muscle structure, which is the particularity of a painter of horses. He will spend almost all of his Sunday mornings from July 1925 until September 1927 there. Georges Busson already was old, and his drawing classes had gained reputation; he integrated Eugene in the working sessions which were paid by the heiress of a rich American family...

President of the equestrian fellowship, Georges Busson reigned supreme over the horse show of the Grand-Palais, which at that time, lasted more than a month. He is the one who prompted Eugene to become a rider: “*If you want to paint horses, you need to ride them!*”

At that time, private classes of horse riding were very expensive, compared to the democratization of 1970. To benefit from special rates, Georges Busson advised him the military training in Paris, place Dupleix, in the very prestigious French Squadron, which its epigraph was *Primus Inter Pares*, “First among the peers”. It was the best equestrian corporation for its horse riding performances (even though not as prestigious as the St Georges Squadron).

Moving in the suburbs: horse-drawn carriages and pastures

Having completed his military training, M. Yosimoto returned to Japan and left all his furniture and valuable belongings to his friends. My father and I grew surrounded by those “Japanese items” which evoked this Francophile and generous samurai that the madness’s of the history threw at the side of the “enemies of France”.

Jeanne and her children, to reduce the cost of their rent will settle in the suburbs.

While walking every morning to the Porte d’Orléans, Eugene goes by the Raffestin stables, and crosses regularly the horse-drawn carriages of the errands services (equivalent of the taxis). The great majority of the cars which circulate in Paris being horse carriages, all the doors of Paris were surrounded by pastures: a lot of space was needed for the horses!

The military training: the painter rider

Quickly Eugene mingled with the examination team. He meets friends with whom he will keep in touch for a long time. Still today, when he remembers his old friends, he names himself as well: “*Richard de la Falaise, Jean Usneau de Senongs, Jean de Sérécourt, Eugene Leliepvre*, so much their names were associated during those years.

In 1927, Eugene wins his first medal. He remembers the training, the voltige exercises, the charges at full speed in the field of Issy-Les-Moulineaux, where the last arrived at

the local pub had to buy a drink to the others. He also remembers the small stone wall which was used by them as a natural obstacle, the shatter of the stones, the sprayings of the dirt, the sweat of the horses, the screams of his buddies who, like him, had known only the war by far, and yelled, jokingly: "Charge!" Many sketches have engraved in the visual memory of my grandfather his emotions of rider. They are always today the source of inspiration for his compositions. No doubt Georges Busson was right: if you want to paint horses and moreover riders, you've got to be a rider yourself. One needs this memory of the body to feel the reality of the movements which one draws.

After his military training in Paris in 1928, at the time of his military service, - first at the "11th Cuirassiers" in Paris, and later on at the 10th colonial artillery regiment in Rueil and Lorient -, he will know more than his instructors in horsemanship. Besides they will leave him to carry out the riding lessons, to break in the new horses and to improve the training of the others. Eugene, who never had enough money to buy himself leather boots, succeeds in finding there some high padded work boots which, although complying with the regulation, will save him from the horrible "tubes" his new comrades were attired.

In Lorient, being first of the unit of the non-commissioned officers, Eugene will receive the fourragère on behalf of the regiment. As soon as he is authorized to go on leave, he departs from Lorient to Montrouge, where he finds for a few hours, the smiling face of his fiancée. All the opposite of the portrait he made right before his departure, where my future grandmother, the young Von, is quite pale and looking sad. At that time, the service lasted eighteen months...

At the regiment, Eugene asks to move up to the artillery to learn how to ride horse-drawn carriages. Ever since, when he draws them, he knows the logic of the harness, the game of the commands, but also bears in mind the physical investment, which is required to lead such convoys.

Being a senior civil servant now, he is also in charge for the follow-up of the Madagascan and Chinese troops, which are part of this mixed regiment. In a shout of laughter he evokes the day when he was writing the promotions on the writing board, he omitted his own name... (I see there the tact and decency of a shy but generous person).

Eugene remembers the friendly faces of the Madagascans – these tall men, ebony color, which were part of the colonial regiments along with their Algerian and Moroccan comrades. All spoke French, which made the communication and friendship infinitely easier than with the Chinese recruits, seldom French-speaking in Lorient.

Transferred to Rueil-Malmaison, in the Paris area, Eugene is taking advantage of the time he spent at the regiment to use his talents of painter by decorating the refectory and the reception rooms of the officers. These professional soldiers that the colonial France sent all over the world admire the truth of the colors of the exotic scenes whose young artist fill their daily life with in Reuil. Eugene doesn't dare tell them that he has never traveled in those far-off regions. The books gave him to see these scenes which his imagination harmonizes in frescos.

Aunt Nini and Uncle Eugene, who would have liked to raise their nephew as a perfect gentleman, broken with all types of conversations, transmitted him the pleasure for reading. Excessively shy, Eugene took refuge in books... his paintings will be inspired by it ... during his entire life! The deafness which will afflict him by the ill-treatments of a

regimental doctor, in 1939, will only reinforce this phenomenon. Eugene Lelievre is a voracious reader, an avid reader and is extremely receptive.

The place of the studio in the new home

Having “served his time “(expression by which one evoked at the last century the eighteen months of military service) Eugene, hardened by the realization of the decorative panels, of which he was at the same time the initiator and the executor, does not seek any longer the advices of his Masters: “he is standing on his own two feet...” Of course he is still working at the studio of M. Saint-Georges, who from then on is relying on him. It is Eugene who now opens and closes the studio, and is supervising the work distribution between the painters. M. Saint-Georges also entrust him to give drawing lessons to his son Jean⁴.

Every year, Eugene exhibits his work at the horse show. His paintings being quite successful M. M... (who lives of his address book by exploiting shamelessly the painters) ordered him several small paintings, of antique style. He places them at the antique dealers, and asks Eugene not to date his productions anymore. It “interferes with the sale”, according to the dealer! This without any doubt appears to be an old opinion... When a painting is located in time, sociology and history enrich by their own echoes the meaning of the artwork in the life of the artists as in that of the patrons.

In Rueil, at the time of his last months of regiment, Eugene had started the illustration of the book of Pierre Mouchon; an ornithologist explorer, famous among the hunters. Back to civilian life, he invests a lot of his time in the study of wild ducks and game hunting.

Later in 1938, after having illustrated numerous covers for the *Chasseur Français*, *Rustica*, and the calendars of *Manufrance*, drawings picturing wild ducks landing on the water, will be complimented by Roger Reboussin, a well-known animalist painter and professor at the Natural History Museum (surely the revenge of the child that once caught typhoid fever by playing in the swamps and capturing cockchafers).

The illustrations of the book of Pierre Mouchon will enable him to buy for his young wife the dining room, common to all new homes. My grandparents will live two years in a small one-bedroom apartment in Arcueil, on the first floor of a small bungalow. A storage room of one meter by two became Eugene’s studio: he leans on one wall to paint on the other. They cut in half the table (M. Yosimoto’s old desk) to fit into the room. It is tiny, but the desire finds its place: Von is sitting in front of Eugene to sew while he paints. Light came in by a small opening at the height of the wall (in architecture, it bears the sad name of “day of suffering”). This window gives on a waste ground where the cavalrymen of the gendarmerie of the fort of Montrouge ride their horses. All the ingredients necessary to the happiness of Eugene are there simply gathered in this small place: joy has no price!

³ A very fine young man; who became a great designer had the opportunity to act in a few movies, and the furniture that he designed combines the fabrics in an elegant style and refinement.

But the ordered paintings required more space; and the young Von didn't see herself becoming a market-gardener. And yet very few trades were easily accessible in this part of Arcueil: thus they moved into an apartment a little bigger in a more animated city. In Montrouge they found a first floor apartment, at the corner of the Perrier Street and the Avenue de La République. The room used as a studio was still modest (3 meters by one twenty five!). It is only later that they will move into the apartment of the rue Boileau, where the two rooms which compose the studio have a beautiful size.

1930, the Cossack friend

Via M. Moreau, Eugene meets during the exhibition of the horse shows of the Grand Palais a noble Russian, Etienne Effremov, Cossack Officer of the White Army. Having lost his estates, he was trying to make the most of his talents of painter of horses and dogs and often signed *Rivet*.

Before the Bolshevik revolution, Etienne Effremov was breeding horses. He implemented on his own their stud-books (booklet which, such as a notebook of birth and health accompanies the racehorse during his whole life). It is by this type of painting that his passion began. He created later on very beautiful fox hunting paintings with Barzoï dogs, in the style of Riabouchine, another Russian painter who signed *Riab*.

In Russia, the property of Effremov extended on a huge province; it took him eight days in troika to reach the nearest train station. He admitted that his wife, at the time of their splendor, had never pulled up alone one of her pair of stockings.

The reversals of history had condemned the young woman to pave the streets... Effremov did all he could to organize her escape, but the plan had been discovered. He never saw his wife again. He wasn't the only one: my grandfather remembers that at that time, all the Parisians cab drivers were Russians.

This Cossack lived in Paris in a squalid hotel room. When he ran out of money, he took refuge in the dormitories of the Russian Church, in the Daru street (close to the Parc Monceau). Effremov had fought the Bolsheviks, in the White Army of the Great Duke and like all the Cossacks who took refuge in France, he was himself bleeding dry for the heir of the throne of "toutes les Russies" so that he could keep a way of life worthy for his rank. It was certainly the only hope, for the nobility, to recover one day their past privileges.

The weakness of this hope intensifying the Russian fatalism, all was, with this man an occasion to drink. Often he came for dinner at the Lelievre's. My grandmother told me that he had the habit, after each toast, to throw his glass over his shoulder, and that it was necessary to lecture him, on this point, to measure his gestures...

In spite of his alcoholism, Effremov was a very good engraver. He reproduced for Duchet and Mathieu (an engraving merchant, avenue de l'Opera) two watercolors of Eugene, wild ducks, and then he worked for a long time for the Madsen gallery.

Effremov taught the engraving techniques to Eugene. The latter acquired the tools as well as a copper plate. But to control the prints and go forward, a press was necessary:: it was a long and expensive process, at which Eugene finally gave up after having completed a tiger head. He left his tools to his friend... My grandfather remembers that after a spraying with sulphur at the hygiene services of the old people's home the tools

which had been left out of their cases turned completely black. But the friendship between the two men was by no means tarnished. Often Eugene gave Effremov canvases and colors for his paintings: passion does not have a price, but minimal conditions of an art do!

The animalist painter

In 1931 a maharajah who was seeking a painter for his huntings, organized Avenue des Champs-Élysées a show of animalist works. A significant contract was promised to the artist who would be selected. On this occasion, my grandfather presented three paintings, illustrated from the book of Kipling: *Mowgli and his friends*, *the Rock of the Council* and *Tomai of the Elephants*. The young couple already imagined themselves in the Indies, dressed as explorers: safari jackets, leather gaiters, tropical helmets and mosquito nets, the entire outfit... In the end, the maharajah did not even make the trip!

This non-event caused some stir in the press and Eugene had the surprise to see that his works were praised in an extremely eulogistic way. It was the first time that a press article spoke about him. It was written by a famous animalist painter; Louis de Lajarrige. When my grandfather told me this anecdote, he added: “*He wasn’t a pen-pusher; he was a great master in his art!*” His grand-daughter “pen-pusher” acknowledges the expression and requests all the literary people to consider with generosity this offhand remark.

Eugene never had the opportunity to meet this man. After M. de Lajarrige’s death, his daughter, who was a painter as well, got in touch with Eugene.

Two of the originals of this show were symbolically given: an old picture shows *Tomai of the elephants* - this strange history of friendship – displayed in a prominent place in the Cantois’s living room, their long standing couple of friends. As for *the Rock of Council* (painting where Mowgli, still a baby, plays with rocks in the middle of a circle of wolves discussing of his adoption by the clan), it naturally found his place in Uncle Eugene Zorninger’s home.

The young couple kept *Mowgli and its friends* as a memory of those years, which had made dream so much those with whom they had bound a friendship.

Eugene discovered then in a corner of M. Saint-Georges’s studio, a splendid carved African frame. He brought it home for a few pennies, and reproduced, in the format “quarante marine”⁴ *Tomai of the elephants*. For a long time, the painting decorated magnificently the dining-room of my grandparents.

Many years later, this same painting followed me through my years of competition, in my small bedroom in Montrouge: I rode the “mammoth”! Then, in 2005, some time before my grandfather’s cerebrovascular accident, I discovered, on the large dining room table, a gray resin statuette of a splendid baby elephant, the trunk eminently pointed ahead in the search of some unknown curious pleasure. This statuette evoked such a strong and powerful echo in me that I wanted to keep it as is for my personal collection. My grandfather told me that it belonged to his student, M. Dominique Billiet, and that it

⁴ It concerns a scale for a canvas on a frame (in this case: 100 cm x 65 cm). It is a convention of representation according to three formats (*figure*, *landscape* and *marine*). In the *landscape* format, the canvas is definitely rectangular, unlike the *figures* (of which the format is a little squarer), and the *marine* (of which the rectangle is definitely narrower and elongated).

waited, there, its passage at the foundry.⁵. Sensitive to my desire as well as my disappointment, Eugene retained for me one of the eight bronzes of the future series, and intended to give it for my birthday. I was wild with joy: it would be for my forty-first birthday, my first bronze!

M. Billiet generously anticipated my desire and gave us the statuette of the baby elephant. In April 2005, at the time of the return of my grandfather to his studio, after his AVC, I had the pleasure to discover more in depth the artwork done by Eugene's former student. I greet in him one of the current Masters of the animalist sculpture. That year, for the 99 years of his Master, M. Billiet sent him a wonderful book about Rembrandt Bugatti, one of the sculptors who enchanted the most Eugene, in his way of seizing the animal paces.

Jo and Nenette, the cheerful friends

The success of the enlarging of the painting "*Tomai of the elephants*" was such that my grandfather reproduced it several times. Such as pollen, it scattered many different versions, taking along with him, at the hazard of the seduced glances, a little of that faraway light which is the imagination of a style.

During that time, Von "was making a little extra on the side" by doing needlework. She got along well with Nenette, a hatter; the two women traded their productions and thus got dressed in the latest fashion at no expenses.

Nenette's husband had done his military service in a regiment in Africa⁶. An extravagant character and lazy though kind-hearted, this Jo had a vague impulse for sculpture: "I will create only one work in my life but it will be something really good!" as he used to say, as if it might excuse his whimsical laziness. (And indeed a few years later he made a splendid dresser in which he carved the zodiac signs of their children). It was especially to please his wife Nenette that he accepted, one evening, to have dinner in the apartment of the painter. But when he discovered within the carved framework the painting of the elephants, something struck him: the memory of his nights in Africa quivered in him.

Jo and Nenette became faithful friends. My grandfather having signed in 1938 two books with illustrations on the Camargue, it will be, post-war period, the excuse for one of the very rare trips by car of my grandparents.

Jo had bought an old rattletrap, of which the seats were pulled apart at each picnic break, so that they could feast comfortably. They discovered together the reality of the Camargue and its horses. The official objective was the traditional celebration of the

⁵ I learned since one calls this kind of statuette, in technical language, a model-master. Out of epoxy resin or plastiline, it is used for the realization of the silicone mould by the founder. It is in this mould that is cast the wax called as "lost" because while melting it leaves the space empty where the founder pours then the bronze of the final parts.. Traditionally, each bronze is numbered: the first eight are numbered with Arabic numerals, to which the four artists tests are added, numbered with Roman numerals. That is to say twelve bronze for one model-master. It is at least the occidental tradition. Therefore, there was obviously no question that I can keep the model-master of his student....

⁶The code name of his camp was « Bidon 5 », to recall it evokes me each time of the « Corbeau 12 » of Colargol...! « This is not the subject! », you will say. But isn't there also a part of hide and seek in the training of the armies?

Gypsy Community of Sainte-Marie-de-la-Mer: they never made it... From small roads to great turnings time passed in a happy improvisation of the moments “An unforgettable journey!, my grandfather to-day still talks about it, with great laughs. The recollection of a pleasure is a pleasure....

Waste grounds and ragmen

Each morning, to catch the subway, which takes him from the Porte d'Orleans to M. Saint-George's studio, in the area of the Abbesses, Eugene crosses a waste ground (which will become later the large public garden of the Porte d' Orleans). Ragmen spread out their strange treasures: it is there that he discovers Edouard Detaille's book, *The French Army*. An advance of 150 francs given by M. Saint-Georges will give him the opportunity to buy the book. In 1935 this was quite a big amount for young couple. Little by little and day after day his military documentation grows richer.

In 1938, Eugene sells a military scene at the equestrian contest of the Grand Palais: a painting of Napoleon's military command which is noticed by the TSF. He signs Lelievre the illustrations of “*The life of General de Sonis*”.

The contracts with the art galleries

Since 1937 the Madsen gallery asked Eugene to work exclusively for them – M. Madsen was holding a gallery of paintings at the 374 Rue Saint Honore, where foreign merchants regularly came to supply themselves. This is why he practiced low prices to permit his customers to ensure their own margins at the resale. But, M. Madsen also published lithographic reproductions of certain works of his artists. The signature of the etchings was well paid. Eugene worked for M. Madsen until his death in 1950. He will immediately be taken on again on an exclusive basis by the gallery Clair. This collaboration will last 25 years; Miss Clair, the daughter of the founder renewed the contract entered by her father. She is the one, who gave my grandfather the long-service medal along with the watch in gold which he is wearing ever since. For an artist who doesn't have a private income, to live with his talent is a rare privilege.

1939-1945: the deafness

France enters in war in September. Eugene is called up as of the first day. He complains for some time already about earaches together with dizzy spells. The inner part of his ears peels.

He must rejoin his garrison in Rueil, to recover his military equipment. He takes the wrong train and almost kills himself by getting off the moving train when he realizes that it has passed Versailles. He finally arrives on time and is affected at a supply post. His helmet is too big for him and his uniform trousers are held by a string. After the examination, a military doctor sends him to the Val-De-Grace hospital for a more thorough examination. There he is examined by a clumsy and incompetent doctor who pierced his eardrums while tearing off the dead skin. Eugene felt dizzy but in spite of the pain, doesn't lose conscience completely. He is sent back to Rueil and proceeds immediately to the front line. He remembers about the disorganization of the camp: shells were transported in civil trucks.

The same evening, the first symptoms of the super infection appears. A yellow putrid liquid is running from both ears. Not to inconvenience his comrades by the stench, Eugene remains in the open air during the journey of the convoys. He climbs on the roof, with the kits. His brigade spends the night in Provins, in an abandoned and vandalized farm. All the beds are soiled. They sleep in the barn; Eugene remembers being comforted by an orphan kitten. Later on an officer noticed his collar which turned yellow by the pus, and sends him to a hospital in Nancy. During fifteen days, he remains there waiting. He doesn't hear anymore. He will be sent to the draft board of Nancy and will be reformed without pension. Four months later this judgment will be confirmed by the military board of Rueil. He is then definitely deaf. 2 weeks before the defeat, he is demobilized. Since he is still subject to sporadic dizziness, Jo accompanies him to bring back his military kit, and to recuperate his civilian clothes.

Since the beginning of the war, Von and her best friend, Paulette Cantois, were gone with their sons to find refuge in the deepest of Brittany assuming that this part of France would only be taken if the whole of France were occupied. As it turned out the assumption was false. Eugene, demobilized, meets his wife at Kergoes. The room where the two women live becoming too small, they move for a while in Prefailles. There was a beautiful property with a riding school. Now that the men were gone, the remaining horses in the stalls got quite nervous with no one to ride them. My grandfather discovers there a beautiful trotter, named Telemaque. A countess, rider, joins them for promenades; the people from the village call her "la Mordue" (the passionate one).

The armistice being officially signed, the German soldiers establish a garrison in the town. As Eugene was painting a decorative panel for a restaurant, a German officer orders him the painting of his horse and then of his dog. While calling up the position of their respective regiments they realized that they had exchanged shots not long before...

In Prefailles, life seems to go on. At least some wanted to believe in it. The armistice provokes sometimes this kind of mirage. Eugene, his wife and Jacques, their son, return to Montrouge to find the two grandmothers who, they had decided to remain to protect the apartment and the studio.

The periods of dizziness worsening, Eugene accompanied by his wife multiplied the consultations of specialists. At that time, they sadly observed how much the respect for the patients was different, depending on whether the same doctor consulted in hospital or in his private cabinet...

But, treated rough or pampered, the diagnosis alas remained the same: Eugene couldn't be fitted with a hearing aid⁷. As for the dizziness's, it became so bad that they had to buy a straight-backed high armchair, to help Eugene stabilize himself. During hours, he could not hold upright: impossible under these conditions to paint on an easel. Moreover until 1950 many of his "mannequins" were made under that constraint. Stuck between the back and the armrest, he fixed his look on his fingers; the space perception was reduced to the minimum. My grandmother also told me that troubles awoke him sometimes at night: "everything was spinning". He had the impression that he was falling into the void, whereas he was lying in bed.

⁷ In spite of the technological developments, he still isn't. In March of 2005 during his hospitalization at Saint Joseph all the examinations took place again, because his deafness was an additional problem in the speech therapy after his cerebrovascular accident.

When Eugene and Yvonne had exhausted all the possibilities of traditional medicine, they heard about Doctor Fourmont, a well-known doctor, who practiced acupuncture. He relieved Eugene from his dizziness's but this took quite a long time.

In many military paintings of Eugene, to-day still, in the foreground of the battlefield, a burst drum symbolizes the mark of his infirmity.

War savings are taking place, for the painters as well....

The Madsen art gallery had been closed for six months because the owner, a Frenchman of Swedish origins, was drafted. On the other hand, M. Saint-Georges' studio was struggling along.

M. Moreau had Eugene work for a notary from Charentes, who pays them in food... The Charentes remained free zone for a long time: it's a godsend! Parcels were regular and the food was very tasty. My grandfather, who had suffered from hunger so much during World War 1, could save his family from this kind of privation during the second one. For this notary he creates forty watercolors and one painting (more difficult to transport).

In Montrouge, there is a small coal merchant who takes advantage of the rising prices to offer oneself a portrait of his daughter playing accordion... which will permit Eugene to heat the studio.

Thanks to the cleverness and the solidarity of the neighbors, the building in the rue Boileau doesn't suffer too much from this war. M. Coccoze, the hardware dealer in colors continues to deliver the frames and the canvases. Uncle Jo supplies the white color when it runs out.

Flowers and female nudes

It is at that period that the paintings of the "petites femmes" at the Madsen gallery become successful. Discreetly patriotic in his floral compositions "corn flowers (blueberries), daisies, poppies", Eugene paints dashing, lively, slender, head-high and with a frank glance, Parisian girls, though often mocking! They are brown, russet-red, sometimes blondes, but of a beauty patinated by the mischievous influences of the Mediterranean. Even naked, or offered, the elegance in their manners makes them untouchable, undefeated. The eternal feminine is a myth which all the eras express in the way they want. In the years 1940, in the paintings of Eugene Lelievre, the "liberated Parisian woman" is radiant.

From the beginning Eugene signs his drawings of his "petites femmes" with his proper name, thereby assuming them officially. Which excludes him, at that time, from the middle-class circles being his clients, to paint under that name, anything else but nudes and flowers... For the other registers of the paintings he made up pseudo.

In connivance with his wife, Eugene signs *Delagorse* (my grandmother's maiden name) the gallant scenes, often done in pastel and which were carefully reproduced in prints for the same gallery. The erotic complicity radiates in the setting of the soft fabric... The silky hangings go with the negligee; the light is skillfully filtered. The heat of the desire radiates the breast, the shoulders, and the curve of the hips and the roundness of the thighs. Lips are attracted and fingers fasten. The evocation of the intimate is in the softness of the curves, and in the moistness of the harmonies.

But, in the heart of the artist, there is not only women's beauty; there are also the majesty of the horses and the splendour of the uniforms.

In his studio Eugene works every morning for the Madsen gallery. But in the afternoon, he cures his deafness in his own way: small toy soldiers and mannequins are his pet hobby.

The peaceful passion of the military beauty

Military uniforms and especially riders were of continuing interest to my grandfather. Being just engaged, his enthusiasm for this subject is quite important for my future grandmother (who dreamed only of dancing!) so that she agrees to spend Sundays, during the whole afternoon, at the library, to transcribe the texts of the pages of the books which he couldn't afford to buy, while he was concentrating on the reproduction of the drawings... (Let us thank for the copying machines, they save us today to provide this evidence of love!)

Since 1927, Eugene is registered at the Historical Figurine Collectors Society, which later on will join *La Sabretache*.

He wants to tackle modeling. A sculptor (former prix de Rome), friend of M. Saint-Georges, gives him some clay to model and a chisel, but one must, every evening, wet the clay, which hardens too much if the work is dropped during a few days: these material constraints are not compatible with the painter's time schedule. Eugene gives up modeling momentarily, while remaining alert at the evolution of the materials. He will later discover with pleasure the qualities of the plastiline.

The revolutionary transformation of the small flat soldiers

It is Jo (the odd friend and lazy artist who became a "cop" at the Saint-Sulpice police station!) who brings Eugene a catalog of small toy soldiers, the "*Mignot*" collection (the shop is adjacent to the police station...).

Mignot was, before the war, the exclusive dealer of the small flat figurines produced by a German house: soldiers of the Ancient Regime, of the First Empire, of the First and Second Reich, and even some modern silhouettes like the Alpine fighters of World War I one, still so close on everybody's mind. The figurines were out of tin. The horses drawn by Rousselot were well made... Eugene tries to obtain some, which is not an easy task...

In 1939, through the Historical Figurine Collectors Society, he learns that a pastry chef near the Gare du Nord, M. Lelong, found in one of his cellars some boxes already painted. But the good man has other concerns: he is not very indulgent towards the expectations of these big children "mad about figurines". At that time, it is quite understandable!

Eugene thus obtains a few boxes of the flat toy soldiers of the Ancien Regime; of which he striped off⁸ the old and ugly paint. There were twelve identical figurines in each box...

8. The long-term effects of the pickling solution not being described on the bottle; my grandfather did not take care to rinse carefully the tins after the treatment. With time, they got corroded: under the new coat of paint, the pickling solution was still active.

Straightaway the static state of the cast bored Eugene and, disliking what everyone can have, he starts to transform them to treat them, each time, as a unique piece: he modifies the position of the legs, the port de tête, and the position of the arms. In the small world of the historical figurine, it is a revolution. The enjoyment he takes from these transformations gives him the idea to produce them in the round⁹ and at a larger scale (so to better distinguish the details of the uniforms) while always keeping in mind the concern for the naturalist aspect of the movements. This idea will give rise to *Historex*, when the evolution of the plastic materials will allow casts with details equivalent to those in lead.

The conquest of the figurines in the round

At the experts meeting, those changes were noticed, and the project of the figurines in the round federated a group of passionate collectors.

In 1942, eight collectors meet on the first floor of the Library Rouleau, in the neighborhood of La Bourse. In addition to M. Rouleau, my grandfather also remembers M. Fouillé, an unrepentant seducer, M. Ballada, a local jeweler, M. Gritton, a banker, and Mrs. Métayer, a woman who wished to launch her own collection of pieces in series ...

Each one, by bringing their own creations shared their bright ideas and difficulties: items stuck in the cast, too soft lead whose engraving is crushed as soon as it is touched...

To sort out the problems one by one, Eugene proposes to produce first a piece easy to remove from the mould (a man on foot, and arms open) that each person would amend afterwards as they please. M. Ballada an expert in the matter succeeds in making a mixture of metal, lead and tin which made lead hard enough to be unmoulded and nevertheless engraved trimmed and filed... He supplies his friends with the necessary tools for these figurines: small soldering irons, tiny tweezers, scalpels (accessories which were impossible to find in the stores at that time).

The know-how of the team get refined and Eugene makes a success of the first horses.

Eugene presents three original pieces whose movements are combined to produce a living scenery: three musketeers in lead who await their d'Artagnan. It is like an invitation to follow him in this new dimension of the figurine. In 1944, the challenge of the figurines in the round became a success.

But the moulds in plaster are deteriorating very quickly, which doesn't permit the production in series of the most successful parts. Mrs. Métayer, who always aims at launching her collection, borrows money from M. Gritton to make metal moulds able to pour bronze.

In the hope to convert the customers of the flat tin soldiers to the figurines in the round, she asks M. Rousselot, who was well-known, to draw the horses on paper and had the set carried out by a traditional founder

The figurines maintain their rigid look, but Mrs. Métayer requests Eugene to make drawings which easily shows the modifications to be carried out on both sides. She launches her collection and makes use of it in her own dioramas. Often my grandfather collaborates on it. . Eugene also lends her some pieces for the promotion of her other

⁹ That is to say, in realist volume in opposition to the flat figurines.

projects. In this way, the scale down model of the elephant in plaster appears in the model representing General Duplex which Mrs. Métayer proposes to an Indian customer.

On his side, Eugene realizes numerous diorama sceneries in the figurines in the round. But, the lead soldiers are fragile; they break too often in transport. Eugene gives up on continuing this project in favor of another making.

1942, the first mannequin in wood and fabric

In the last years of the war, the deafness of Eugene, then the death of his sister Suzanne in the last bombing of the station Versailles-Chantier, having surely awakened the memories of childhood of the other war, the artist starts with his wife a new activity: the mannequins. It seals with leather, iron, felt and wood the complicity between this extraordinary couple, who celebrated in 2004 their 75 years of common life!

A collector and friend of the family, M. Nonce Barone, whispers to me that "Mamie" - as he used to call her, just like me - wasn't just happy to contribute to the making of the mannequins, but she also gave her advice on the composition of the paintings. My grand father confirms that her advice was often judicious. But with regard to the making of the costumes of the mannequins, Yvonne's contribution largely exceeded this simple recommendation: her contribution was determining.

These mannequins are the work of a couple. Nonce spoke to me in confidence "your grandmother is an extraordinary woman", and I know that in this tribute there is no ambiguity. My grandmother had a strong personality but she was very clever. She knew how to entertain her guests and to assist the man she had chosen to love.

Strange adventure to reproduce in a room, in the most scrupulous details, the clothes of the soldiers engulfed in the wars of yesterday: to produce figures, to mould different materials, to make the eyes alive, to articulate arms and legs, whereas the war dynamites, amputates and kills...

In miniature it is all to create "for the parade", as to better deny the monstrosity of the mass graves and the horror of the explosives which destroy, in the mud pits, all the hopes and the knowledge other than warlike.

The first mannequins who were made are all riders. The first one was carried out in 1942, under the bombings. The couple kept alive the myth to feel themselves in security between the thick walls of the corridor which crosses their apartment. Impassioned, one gets used to anything (Jacques was rushing down to the basement as of the first alarm!)

This first mannequin is a rider 1750. At the flea market Eugene had found the molding of a horse of Mène, in plaster, whose scale was appropriate for his own projects. So he made a mannequin of the same proportion (15 centimeters for one meter). Then, he decided to make himself the horses. He had the heads and the bodies of the horses molded by M. Luissetti, whose workshop was rue Didot. In this way, Eugene created 12 versions of different positions.

In a corner of the glass case behind the desk of my grandfather, his first rider is still there, sitting on a miniature saddletree. It is also reproduced in a painting where several sketches show it of face, profile and back.

We join in appendix of this biography a double page in which Eugene answers more precisely the questioning of Commandant Bernard Sevestre for the centenary issue of La Sabretache.

The last mannequin remains unfinished: Henry IV on his white horse. The velvet jodhpurs is already visible on the vermilion saddle embroidered in gold but the chest is bare without arms...my grandmother had broken the wrist.

Military maps, the meeting with Benigni through drawings

It is also in 1942 that Eugene discovers the military maps, published by Commandant Bucquoy. They are signed in particular by Pierre Benigni and Henri Boisselier (two of Daille's students who didn't get along). Eugene wishes to complete his collection and to work in this filiation. But travel is difficult in occupied France. At the time of a trip to Nancy by Mrs. Leguet, a neighbor, he made her carry to Commandant Bucquoy several drawings, typical of his style, with the request to bring back some cavalry maps. Commandant Bucquoy placed an order for three drawings which he published. When Pierre Benigni, who lived in Marseille, discovered them he wanted to get acquainted with the painter. They had a prolific correspondence and met once the war was over. But my grandfather always regretted the difference in treatment of the stencil sets depending on the artists of this collection. Indeed, Commandant Bucquoy had limited means. Only Benigni's plates benefited from a broad range of stencils and a refined coloring. This didn't contribute to ease the tensions between Benigni and Boisselier!

Two ways of being at war

It scares me to compare the fate of both my grandfathers during World War II. My mother's father, communist worker at the meters factory "Schlumberger" in Montrouge, was a member of the French resistance movement; he escaped twice from the work camps and died in deportation in Grossbeeren¹⁰: he left three children behind. The last one was not even born; in his letters, he called him Pierrot, it will be a girl, Danielle, the youngest child...he will never see her.

My mother, Françoise, was 8 years old in 1945. She grew up in Montrouge, 2 rue Camille Peltan in a social district, a place for houses at low rent. All her memories of childhood proceed on the lugubrious horizon of fear and deprivations. A few streets from there, the man who will become her father-in-law had been demobilized by lack of hearing. Silence took hold of him by the clumsiness of a military doctor, but his body would perhaps have recovered, without the after-effects of typhoid of the other war, and maybe also without the horror which the reality of the battles inspire to the sensitivity of the artist...

Engulfed by the world of silence, cut down by this share of access to the world which is the ability to listen, Eugene is chasing his ghosts. To better master the movement of the fabrics and the position of the folds in his paintings, Eugene reconstructs the uniforms of yesterday's prestige. He also pours lead, not for the bullets but for the love of art.

¹⁰ A work camp near Berlin

When he crosses occupied Paris to meet, on the first floor of a bookshop, a group of friends, they are not resistance fighters but collectors...

In 1933, Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein publish "Why the war?" in 1976, Henri Laborit "The Praise of the escape"...

There are actors who initiate conflicts; there are also the war profiteers, the "interested collaborators". Then of course those who, like the "moutons de Panurge", will always follow the lead of the one who speaks the loudest. At the other end of this political spectrum, there are the resistant ones, the rank-and-file members, the rebels who often, have great difficulty to grant their trust to carry out a concerted collective action. But, there is also another type of dissidence: the one which "unrealize" the conflict by its manner of being elsewhere while being here.

The artist sticks only to his dream. It is a psychological distressing reality for the one who feels the urgency to make a choice, to act, and to counter the progress of an identified evil. But, today, after so many adverse publicities, distorted by the corruption of the racketeers, the proliferation of these artistic temperaments, those "freaks of unreality", would it not have something to teach us?

The after war: marketing of the mannequins and the figurines

It is only after the war that Yvonne and Eugene met Mr. Mathiot, the president of the horse shows in Algeria. This pied-noir (Algerian born Frenchman) was the owner of a land equivalent to a whole province in the area of Lavarande, beside Orleansville.

Collector being fascinated by the miniature models, he knew about the work of Mrs. Metayer. She is the one who introduced him to my grandfather. Eugene made for him more than 500 figurines, all being exceptional items.

In 1948, Eugene carries out for Mr. Mathiot his first order of mannequins out of wood and fabric. The skeletons of the mannequins have a wire framework covered with fabric stripes maintaining the stuffing out of duffel very tight, which provides total flexibility of the articulation.

But, it is initially by his concern for truthfulness in his paintings that Eugene felt the need to create mannequins. It was a question of seeing what the museums never presented before: uniforms worn by bodies whose attitudes reproduced the naturalness of the movements.

Military prints at the Salon of the Army

Commandant Bucquoy, in addition to publish military maps, directed also the "Passepoil", body of the Research Office of the Uniforms from France. As time goes by he became a great friend of Eugene. After the war, each time the Commandant came through Paris, he never failed to see him- him and his models! He had long conversations with Etienne, one of the preferred models of Eugene, a superb young woman, sharp and bright, as distinguished naked as dressed. For his friend, Eugene will paint a large nu, some prints and an equestrian portrait of the Commandant.

After the war was over, in 1951, the Salon of the Army was restored. Eugene Lelievre is then selected as Official Painter of the Army. They were only ten at that time. He

produces, for the United States of America, prints of the French troops having landed on the American ground.

At that time, via Mr. Saint-Georges, he produced also two large military panels for the property in Nice of the owner of the beauty cream Tokalon (a well-known trademark of that time).

In 1957, Eugene meets Mr. Danchin, a former consul in retirement, who had a passion for engraving. He goes into the edition business and publishes the cavalry prints of Eugene which had a lot of success: not less than one hundred and thirteen plates delicately colored with a stencil. The painter was paid at each signature, each engraving having to be signed by hand, but, often, it was Mr. Danchin himself who signed them himself so not to disturb my grandfather. This engraver, from the rue St-Georges in Paris, will remain a faithful friend. He was the son of an artist, Leon Danchin, who was a friend of Uncle Zorninger.

Eugene remembered to have met, in Loos, when he was twelve years old, a man with an imposing appearance drawing their dog, Sultane. The fortunes of the existence have sometimes that kind of shortcut. Forty years later, two strangers getting to know each other meet, recall their well-known ghosts, a hotbed of new friendships.

1950: Prestige of France overseas: stamps, decorative panels and dioramas

Victorious, thanks to the Allies, France seeks to restore its former prestige by its colonial influence. M. Douziech, who holds power of attorney for the Overseas Postage Stamps Agency, seeks to order decorative panels and stamps, which will give a boost to the Aeropostale. He is the father of one of Eugene's students, Jean Paul Douziech, to-day sculptor.

The commissions were well remunerated. It is a stamp of Siam which made it possible to my grandparents to pay for the wall which separates their garden in Armentières from that of their neighbor's: a stamp for a wall!

The areas of expertise are certainly different. But the times of these works have little proportion: there are some state orders which one can wonder whether it is quite honest to benefit from it.

Eugene created numerous decorative panels to present the various sets of the stamps from the colonies. It is M. Douziech's senior executive who insisted upon Eugene getting the decoration for the arts from France overseas.

Never Eugene went there to draw on site, a sketchbook by hand. Of all his life of adult he never undertook any long-haul trip. His order book kept him here; and anyway, he preferred his studio. But he got immersed in literature, which is another type of travel: sensitivity is touched by the power of recollection of the words.

It is by recovering the off-cuts of the cases out of wood from the Post Office that Eugene carved the busts and legs of his mannequins. Was it maybe an unconscious wink at Gilbert, his cousin and almost brother who died, years ago after having opened the first airmail line between Paris and Alicante? Sculpture, archaic, is a memory of mourning.

Fifteen years of collaboration with the Marine Museum

Eugene always had a passion for dioramas. Already child, he would lower a flap of a shoebox and built his theater there. While walking, he was looking eagerly for any material the chance can offer: twigs, sand, and pebbles.

He quickly understood that, to give truly life to the scenery, the figurines must be created for it. It is hard to find in the shops the figurine or accessory at the right scale and the frozen movements don't correspond to the objective.

Commandant Vichot, curator at the Marine Museum in Paris, places an order to Eugene for large dioramas. My grandfather had found a way to make the figurines out of copper wire which he fixed at the base by perforating the floor of the diorama. The skeleton was at first covered with small paper strips, it is at this stage that Eugene gave them the desired posture, and then he recovered them with a coating. After having let them dry, he filed the surplus. They were painted afterwards before pushing them into the base. This formula had the advantage of making them unbreakable. The figurines which weighed only a few grams kept their position in spite of the often chaotic transport conditions.

These dioramas had an enormous success. Some were reproduced in postcards. Beyond the debate on the character, the one representing *Pierre Savorgnan of Brazza freeing the slaves from their chains* has a particular place in my heart.

During 15 years, Eugene Leliepvre worked for the Marine Museum. He illustrated the history of the overseas events for each of these departments by means of dioramas. In search for accurate information, he maintained a long correspondence with the corvette captain, Francois Langlet, one of the characters who inspired the "Crabe Tambour". He was also the brother-in-law of M. Jean Pierret, collector of documents and historical figurines. He and Eugene became friends.

With the repatriation from Algeria, a large model of ship came back in bits and pieces. Commandant Vichot, who really liked this ship model, asked my grandfather to repair it, or to build a new one...

My grandfather told him to be realistic, to treat the model as a wreck, and to use it as part of a historical retrospective of the conquest of the ocean bottoms. Eugene molds in the form of figurines all the generations of divers up to the latest new web suits of the Cousteau's expeditions.

Rust and seaweeds invade the body of the defeated warship; starfish, coral and fish are taking possession of the place. The scientific and playful exploration of the sea beds replaces the warlike disasters....

Stencils for the United States of America

About 1958, Eugene decided to subscribe to the *Company of Military Collectors and Historians*, whose prestige in the United States is historically comparable to the one of *La Sabretache*. For some time already he entertained at his home American collectors, in particular M. James Tily and M. Peter Blum, who ordered him drawings and who, also belonged to this association. Eugene sent them three prints which were welcomed by the members of the company, pleased to have at their disposal a French source capable to deal with precision the French troops.

"In 2008, on the occasion of its centennial, Eugene Lelièpvre received the highest award honoring a military historian in North America" to The Star Distinguished Service Award of the Military Historians Company.

From then on, Eugene was often solicited for new illustrations and became soon a member of the "office". He wrote the explanatory texts accompanying his prints and colonel Elting, who became his friend, translated them. In recognition for the performed work, Eugene received in 1962 a large parchment honouring him with the honorary title of "Fellow" of this association and, about ten years later (1974), the same colonel Elting presented him together with the Gold Medal of the Company, the "Distinguished Service Award"¹⁰.

As Eugene was so successful in the States with his drawings, M. Tily decided to publish an entire set of prints concerning the French troops in Canada. From 1960 up to 1964, at the rate of two prints per year, Eugene illustrated the regiments of the Queen and the Languedoc, the regiment of the Royal Roussillon, the infantry of the Sarre, the regiments Montcalm and the Languedoc from Fort Carillon, the gunners and bombardiers of Canada, the infantry of Guyana, the infantries of Berry and the Bearn.

Being caught up, Eugene published in parallel, with Mr. Danchin, a book to the glory of the small amount of men who, in spite of their numerical inferiority could, by their heroism and the sense of their joint action, stand ground against the English. *Les lys sous les érables* – is the title which Eugene chooses for this collection of prints published by the *Gravure française* and includes an historical introduction page where Eugene had the opportunity to express in his own words all the admiration the painter feels for those adventurers of the Nouvelle-France: men slogging away at the task, advancing in the frozen snow of the winters to meet up those who they baptized Hurons, by assimilating their strange hairstyle to the head of a wild boar. *Wendats* is their true name and means "insular people": the development of the ethnology was going to teach us not to ignore anymore the ancestral wisdom of their social organization

In this whole beginning of the sixties, the American printers did not practise the patient technique of the stencil. The printings carried out were mainly monochrome (black or sanguine). The screen printing processes, which will become very trendy in the Pop-Art, were yet only experimental.

But Eugene knew in Paris a printer who, to him, was the best stencil colourer of his generation: M. Caillé. (He already produced for the Madsen gallery the stencils of the gallant pastels of Eugene). The painter thus suggested that the prints ordered by M. Tily be printed and colored here, then dispatched to the United States. M. Danchin was given the responsibility to find the paper.

The workshop of M. Caillé was located in an old private mansion in the area of Francs Bourgeois. Six women worked with him at the carving and the setting of the stencils. The wife of M. Caillé belonged to this group. It was there a trade of art and thoroughness of

¹⁰: For the French reader, these titles probably do not mean anything: they are granted on the recommendations of a jury and after a vote of the council of the governors of the Company. Neither the United States nor Canada not having comparable official state decorations, for example, with the Academic Palms in France, these distinctions are prestigious over there, though emanating from what one names *here* "the associative world". The *Company of Military Historians* continues to play an essential part in the research, and the diffusion, of knowledge of the military life of past times and the culture of the uniforms

which many steps were assigned to women – undoubtedly because the custom was to pay them less than the male craftsmen (but on this point, my grand-father, in those days, specifies only “a work for woman”). M. Caillé had a trained eye for the shades; he composed himself his own colours for the stencils.

The prints of the series *French in Canada*, coloured with stencils, met a sharp success and were sold out soon. Then the progress of the photographic processes allowed other performances in less time. A member of the Company, who had privileged access to an American printing company, took charge of the continuation of the adventure.

During these years, the Museum of the Fort, in Canada, also ordered 12 prints to Eugene, which were accompanied by the texts of M. Baldet.

In France, the editions of *Le Bivouac*, under the leadership of M. Devarieux, carried on this immersion in the memory of the *French in Canada*: 29 prints of Eugene Lelievre, commented by Jacques Haessler, reproduce the costumes of the troops who from 1665 to 1762 wrote this period of the History of our three countries. This subject was also covered by the prints of Eugene for *Le Cimier*, managed by Jacques Vuyet.

China, fifes and drums

The City-Museum of Williamsburg joined M. Tily to edit old style earthenware tiles, in a wink to this revolved past of the Conquest of the Nouvelle-France, which makes always dream both sides of the Atlantic. Eugene thus took great care to reinvent the naivety of the military silhouettes which decorated the kitchenware and the walls of the canteens.

In 1972, at the opening of the historical Museum of Fort Ouiatenon, in Indiana, Eugene Lelievre got also an order from the former corps of the Fifes and Drums of Tippecanoe. Prints needed to be made of the uniforms of the troops and musicians of the *Compagnie Franche* of the Navy.

The drum rolls regulated the various moments of the life of the soldier: they awoke and gathered the troops, imposed silence, delighted the evenings or summon up one's courage during the long marches and at the approach of the battles. The fife and drum, that our electronic rhythms have forgotten, are part of a great number of pages of History; for it is true that no crowd gather without anthem to sing.

In memory of the soldiers of the Nouvelle-France.

Mannequins and paintings for the National Historical Sites of Canada

During the same period, Eugene received important orders from the National Historical Sites of Canada, via M. Chartrand, who became, with the years, this specialist in military history whose conferences had such a big success. Eugene admits not to remember precisely the date at which time he met René Chartrand, having the impression to have always known him so much they worked together and became partners in this common passion of the historical reconstruction...

In fact, in 1967, at the time of the Exhibition which marked the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Confederation, a Parisian friend of Eugene, M. Gustave Gras, figurinist, had sympathized in Montreal, with M. Michel and Mrs. France Chrétien, passionate collectors from Quebec. It is through this network of friendship that René Chartrand will be put into relation with Eugene.

At first René Chartrand came to Lyon to seek weavers, capable of reproducing the braids of the uniforms of the Ancien Regime. This concern of detail is entirely to his credit. M. Gras understood it and introduced Eugene who, for his part, made with his wife the uniforms in miniature for his mannequins. A long and lasting friendship between the two men was born, entertained by the same passion for historical reconstruction and its lessons of human capacities confronted to adversity.

During all his career of curator, M. Chartrand worked for the space developments in the museum of the national historical sites of Canada. Fort, harbour, barracks, arsenal. For each place, it was necessary to let the stones deliver their messages and to return the testimonies to the sites of the persons who had lived there.

Through the orders of M. Chartrand, Eugene made for the Parks, 36 foot mannequins (and one rider), each of them being accompanied by prints as well as by articles allowing their setting in situation; Eugene took especially care of the looks and the attitudes. Life in the forts was a singular mixture of friendship, discipline and duties. The feeling of loneliness, reinforced by the geographical isolation, gave them the taste of simple pleasures, which was not always without running up against the submission to the code and to the hierarchy.

A series of 39 watercolors (initially intended for the realization of an audio-visual cartoon film, then reproduced in poster color) reconstitutes the various life times of a soldier in the regiments of the Canadian Acrobats and the Canadian Civilian soldiers of 1813 to 1814: from the recruiting (on the square of the church, after the sermon, then in the tavern), until the blackest periods of the dungeon and the punishment for the rebelsNot to conceal the grim reality of the military discipline –with sometimes its drifts – is also to admit, in good faith, the right to glorify the pleasure of the parade and the collective successes.

It is at that time that the young Francis Back presented his first works to Eugene. He was then a student at a school of art in German speaking Switzerland and his drawings did not have yet the strength and the creativeness which he was able to give to his soldiers since and who make the amazement of my grandfather like so much others.

The young man was taking advantage of his school holidays to improve his military education. In order to save the student lodging expenses, my grandmother suggested him to install for him a camp bed in Eugene's workshop. Being a little girl, this young draftsman personified the bohemian life of the students that only passion guides.

Later on, Francis Back, René Chartrand, as well as Michel and France Chrétien, (who became very close friends to my grand-parents) were so kind to accommodate me, during my first long trip (just after having obtained the baccalaureat). They thus saved some fear to my family, not very enthusiastic with the idea to see me leaving bag to back with a friend quite as young and naive that I was. But the Canadian landscapes, the rivers, the plains, the lakes and the mountains, had too much inspired the work of my grandfather, and thus impregnated my childhood, for that I do not decide, as a teenager, to go and see there, more closely, my way.

Today still, Eugene feels himself closely related to the memory of the cousins of New France: land virgin, new, where nature is vaster, the air sharper, and the feeling of freedom larger.

“The extraordinary story of the soldiers of the Nouvelle-France”: the book of the Memorial, at the Oléron Castle

At the end of the eighties, M. Jacques Bodin, a former pupil of the military school of Saint-Cyr, being passionate about History, took advantage of his departure to retirement – after thirty years of service in the Army – to return on the traces of the soldiers and French sailors of the XVIII, who embarked for America. The passion of the accounts given by the descendants, and the importance of the documentation which he found gave him the idea to carry out in France a museum in the spirit of those who give life to the historical places of Canada. Under his impulse, a Memorial of the soldiers of the Nouvelle-France opened its door in 1992, at the Citadel of the Castle of Oléron, followed, in 1993, by a book, richly illustrated, which resumed the key points of the documents available: “The extraordinary story of the soldiers of the Nouvelle-France” (O.C.A. Communications. Poitiers).

One can find there numerous watercolours of Eugene, from the time when the regiment of Carigan landed in Quebec in 1655 to wage war against the Iroquois (in league with the English) and of which half of the men remained on the spot assuming at the same time the role of peasants and military men ... until the final event of the surrender, on 8 September 1760: with the last gathering of the French soldiers, in the island of Sainte-Hélène (vis-à-vis Montreal) choosing to burn ritually the flags of the various surviving regiments rather than to hand them over to the English.

At all times, the international politics for conquest has exploited the “clannish divisions” of the native populations. The competition of the political interests is always also economic. At the XVII century, North America, large supplier of the furs and the leathers for Europe, presented in addition unknown lands which gave the hope, for a long time, to discover a new commercial way towards Asia. England and France were going to continue over there, their rivalry of neighbours. But the numerical deficiency of the troops and the French colonists, (compared to the contingents of military and English emigrants) caused a strategic effect to favour the French Alliance with the Indian nations: their support being the only chance of success.

This “concern of crossing the traditions”, this willingness - even awkwardly displayed on behalf of the French people - to form “only one and same people” by marrying Indians, is worth probably, at the recollection of this conquest, its singular nostalgia... in addition to the solidarities of coexistence which imply inevitably the very hard climatic conditions of the great Canadian spaces.

1960: the French way of life! : post-war-economic boom and publicity”

At the time of his arrival in Paris, as a teenager, Eugene had been touched by two reproductions by Georges Busson which he found framed in an antique shop. To his

astonishment, he discovered, years later, in 1960, these same reproductions, in a large size, in the managing director's office of the Sirven publishing company (a house specialized at that time in graphic publicity)!

M. Sirven was happy to have found in Eugene an illustrator "able to do everything". The artist was delighted: labels for the wine, publicities for sausage and leaflet for a fish merchant in the Boulogne-sur-mer neighborhood; "pin-ups" for thermometers, washing machines, girdles, lingerie¹¹ and beauty cream. Monks feasting or playing croquet; illustrations of proverbs; tightrope walkers and circus acrobats; Breton traditional celebrations, and country life... More than one hundred of drawings illustrate the gastronomic pleasures to the gourmet standard, the joy of the simple delights, all in a spirit of conviviality. In short, the softness of the peace and of the prosperity returned.

The calligrapher of the Sirven editions is amazed by what a fifty-year-old man is not infatuated of abstraction. By seeing the drawings of Eugene, he would have bet that their author was an old man. My grandfather loves life too much -the roundness's of pleasures like the refined and exact attitudes to create unreal paintings. Via the calligrapher of the Sirven editions, Eugene also, at that time, produces a series of drawings for the rally of the Lyon's Club, of which he was never a member. One's got to live somehow!

Eugene contributed during forty years to the "Chasseur Français" and for quite a number of years he illustrated also the issues of the magazine "Rustica" (from novels of hunting, to romances and recipes). This magazine, whose readership is the rural people, declined later on with the rural migration of the small farmers.

Eugene also illustrated, 23 years in a row, the calendars of "Manufrance".

The Historex adventure

M.Mathiot, who had taken advantage of the status of colonist in Algeria, undergoes head-on the war of liberation and had to go into exile. He asked Eugene to reproduce in plastic certain parts of his collection in order to market them in the United States. To this end he chooses the same engraving workshop as the Mokarex toy soldiers, which were offered in the packages of coffee (it was the beginning of the advertising gadgets). This is how Eugene met M. Gillet, the new associate of M. Fualdès: the two engravers knew their job well.

M.Mathiot, who had asked them to draw some horse engravings, owed them money. But its former way of life of landowner was not compatible at all with his new condition as a contractor. As he was used to spend freely, he got ruined in luxurious hotels and did not honor his debts.

The initiated horses at the engraving workshop remained no longer its property. M.Gillet and my grandfather made the project their own. Eugene took care of the prototypes to avoid polishing, while M. Delhomme built the moulds. He was an old irascible bachelor but a talented engraver who worked since a long time for the Gillet and Fualdès workshop.

¹¹ This is when my grandmother discovers the « Scandale » girdles; the name is audacious for a female accessory which squeezed our grandmothers before becoming obsolete.

The first hussar was a success both in France and in North America and England. Eugene had then the idea to assemble a whole collection of figurines of the Empire period, which would both combine the play of the multiple articulations of the members with the scrupulous detail of the insignias and uniforms. These historical figurines, would once painted, have the perfect completion of lead, but also the lightness and the low price for plastic in 1960: the *Historex* concept was born.

Yvonne, being the wife of an artist, who neither had the feel nor the administrative competence, did not want to lock up the savings of the couple in this adventure. Eugene would be paid upon order, and M. Gillet provided the necessary money for launching the project. He became manager and his wife a secretary. But very quickly the mails being specialized, it is Eugene who wrote the whole and ensured the follow-up of the orders with the retailers abroad, as for each item a historical note was to be included to explain the context of the uniform: a huge extra work, which soon justified the employment in the company of his son, Jacques. It was the time of the first stands of demonstration of the miniature models (initially at the CNIT-La Défense, then Porte de Versailles).

In England M. Sangster became the exclusive agent. I remember at that time having received during several years, at Christmas and Easter, superb Anglo-Saxon gifts: the retailer of *Historex* trapped the artist by spoiling his grand daughter. I received thus, well before it was the fashion in France, my first Barbie ... Children also play with dolls!

When my grandfather, a flash of pride in the voice, declares "*Historex it is me!*" the slightest figurine, the slightest document which constituted this enormous collection confirms it. And it was, as of launching and until 1990, an enormous success¹².

But, M. Gillet is getting old. He and his wife wanted to retire (a word which is irrelevant in my grandfather's state of mind: at ninety nine years old he continues to pay to the retirement fund for the artists his share of the revenues for the works which he sells every year).

The moulds of *Historex* were wearing out as well. It was necessary to think about replacing them or selling by accepting depreciation.

M. Gillet wanted to get the maximum profit from his investment. He did not agree to the different proposals of Jean Josseau of taking-over, although he was perfectly qualified to continue the adventure. Instead a "*triumvirate*" took place, and then finally there was talk of liquidation. Jean Josseau notified my grandfather that on the last assessment, *Historex* owed him the trifling sum of 35.000 Francs!

My grandfather, handicapped by his deafness, refused to waste his energy of creative artist in financial quarrels. As for my grandmother, she feared the lawyer expenses and didn't want, at more than eighty years old, to be likely to lose her savings.

When, a few years later, *Historex* reappeared in Belgium, Eugene simply advised the new owner that he owed him the sum of 35.000 Francs. He was completely ignored.... But he did not carry out any lawsuit, he had even the kindness - some will say the naivety - to draw a greeting card for the rebirth of *Historex*, as he used to do so ritually, each year, at the time of the engraving workshop of the street Pétion.

From 1975 to 1982 indeed, Eugene and his son animated a collector's club: "The friends of *Historex*". Together, they celebrated cheerfully each New Year like one would

¹² The first catalog is published in 1963, the last one, number 49, is put together by Eugene Lelievre in 1989.

celebrate the birthday of a child. Eugene drew the greeting cards which were specifically dedicated to each member. *Historex* was his baby, and he let it escape....

Passive witness of this bankruptcy, my mother placed all her hopes in me: that I make a success of my studies was her obsession; she wanted me to become a legal adviser. However she gave birth to a philosopher... It is in 2005, during the month spent at my grandfather's bedside in the neurology department of St Joseph Hospital, that I formed the project of this biography.

Concerning the cards of the *Historex* small plastic pockets as well as all of the iconography which comes in addition to it, it is an enormous file which will undoubtedly find place in a publication of a more important volume. It is necessary to praise here the tenacity of M. Sangster, the English agent of the trademark.

It is also M. Sangster who took care of the distribution in England of the prints of *Le Cimier* that Jacques Vuyet ordered from Eugene as of 1986 up to 1990: 15 series of four different prints (two prints of the cavalry and two prints of the infantry), 60 prints on the whole, reproduced with refinement, all of them to the glory of the beauty of the military uniforms of the past times.

Diversity of the subjects and of the signatures

Before the war, the art merchants didn't conceive that the public could accept from the same painter feminine nudes *and* scenes of horse-drawn carriages and hunting, or Parisian landscapes *and* illustrations for children. As if *all* the subjects were not above and beyond the interpretation by the work of the manner and the harmony of the colors....

While working for the Madsen Gallery, Eugene took many pseudo: he signed *De Marcillac* (name of a distant ancestor of its father-in-law) bright and luminous landscapes, as well as masculine nudes glorifying the virile beauty, or horse-drawn carriages and hunting scenes. But it is under his own name that he assumed from the start his *petites-femmes*: Parisians, mischievous or dreamy, languorous or sulky.... *Delagorse* (maiden name of his wife) was the signature of which he used for the small gallant paintings treated on the pastel mode¹³. And by irony, he chooses to sign the views of Paris of the name of this Belgian peasant - *M. Laurent* - who had so nicely accommodated them, during the exodus of the First World War. Crossing of the destinies and the people, masks of the names: it is under the pseudo of "Tonton" that he signed his numerous paintings for the children, him, Eugene, who had the first name of his uncle and did not have a nephew. ¹⁴...

During this period, three times a week, Von delivered to the Madsen Gallery. Eugene was working "non-stop"... To avoid upsetting M. Madsen (for whom he is supposed to work

¹³ For the prints reproducing his pastels, my grand father gave the printer a copy colored with gouache (forty stencils were then necessary to reproduce the color scale "pastels"). M. Madsen did not mind the costs: these gallant scenes were sold like "hot cakes"!

¹⁴ Suzanne died childless along with her husband, during the last air raid of the Versailles-Chantier station. During the war, the Gestapo, who carried out an investigation, questioned my grandparents, about Suzanne and her husband André Audebourg, the youngest of three brothers: courageous Suzanne...

on an exclusive basis) Eugene signs “*André Chevalier*” the players of polo which the American Sidney Z. Lucas orders him.

From 1947 Eugene starts to modify the shape of his patronymic signature. In 1951 he adopts on all his paintings the same writing as the one he uses in everyday life. Faithful to the tradition he adds to his signature the two crossed swords, symbol of the Official Painters of the Army.

When he started to receive at his place his own customers – which supposed that he had some paintings in advance- the collectors were each time seduced by the astonishing variety of the techniques and the variety of the covered subjects. Why do you look for unity? If there is a common spirit to these productions, it is in the clearness of the movements: it is the essential expression of this man with the active mind of which we celebrate in 2007 the ninety-ninth birthday.

Eugene Lelievre continues to be interested in everything: from “Le Figaro” to “Marianne” as well as reading the basic articles of “Le Monde Diplomatique” (which he never puts away without thinking that this world is a heart breaking and that he prefers his studio!); from numerical revolution to the stage of objects, while passing by the comic strips of Franquin, Sorel and Bilal; from neurobiology, to the political stakes of biological agriculture and nuclear waste: everything I gave him to read was right to the point! I see in this capability to encompass by imagination, the causes, the stories, and the subjects, one of the recipes for his longevity.

10 years at the equestrian center of Armentières-en-Brie

During all these years, Eugene went on to socialize with the Parisian horsemanship society of the Quartier Latin. His son was doing the same. Both mounted twice a week in the evening in the riding stables close to the Pantheon, and on Sundays in the forest of Compiègne. A childhood friend of Von, Raymond Cantois, who lived beside “Le Père Lachaise”, had a small property at Rethondes. His father, an industrial bookbinder, was a close friend of my grandmother’s father, Henri Lagorse (himself being an art bookbinder, Eugene called him affectionately “Dad”). The men and the boys of the two couples were good riders.

Jo, the other friend, fishing amateur, had found in Seine and Marne a small quiet village, in a bend of the Marne, on the outskirts of the forest of Monceau, in Armentières-en-Brie.

Raymond Cantois having a car, the three families were found frequently together at that place. One day, while approaching Meaux, they cross a group of riders and from then on decide to frequent these under woods suitable for cross-country and leisurely walks. The rider, who runs the equestrian club, was a former “Garde Républicain”, in retirement, Captain Olivier. My grandfather had his favorite horse there: Sprint, a chestnut horse, which jumped without any problem the natural obstacles but refused the artificial ones. This horse had also the particularity, at each railway or crossing, to look of right-hand side and left, if there were nothing to fear while crossing. Undoubtedly he had been trained this way or had been injured in an accident.

However, since the town of Meaux was building new housing, the equestrian club had to move. M. Olivier left with his horses for Chambly, in the property of Prince Murat. My grandfather remembered that once my father (he was then only fifteen) rode a horse there named Altis which was more than 17, 5 hands high. This thoroughbred was trained for the races: he knew its running track. When Jacques felt that the horse was moving towards the huge obstacle wall, he really got scared! Eugene still tells it with sparkling eyes. I try to imagine the relationship between the father and the son at that time: undoubtedly a tender cocktail of complicity and emulation... My grandfather, modest and shy, admitted having often been envious of the friendly and forthcoming character of my father, like his elegance for dancing. Jacques had made friends with the youth of Armentières and the surroundings. For the sunny weekends and the holidays Von and Eugene had rented an old barn. Then, my grandmother benefited from a heritage and she was able to purchase it. Young and less young people regularly came to celebrate at their home. Each year, the birthday of Jacques, on August 26, became an occasion to close, in great jubilation, the house.

Eugene knew Bernard Vanot: he was also a figurinist and in love with the horses. This artist with the Bohemian temperament had always possessed several horses which he trained for the polo tournaments. In 1965, in spite of his low revenues, he had eight horses and was seeking for them a new pension.

At the entry of the village of Armentières, the Castle Capoulade had old stables of the XVIII century. Eugene asked M. Bailleux if his mother-in-law would agree to return them to their destination of origin. The idea was welcomed with enthusiasm. Bernard Vanot placed his horses there. This incited other owners to do likewise. When, chased by his creditors, Bernard Vanot had to leave the area, M. Bailleux and Eugene went to the farm stud of the department to obtain some other horses. Quickly, the equestrian club expanded.

It was during more than ten years a marvelous adventure. Eugene was attached to this club as if it belonged to him. The impulse was there; the riders arrived largely before the riding lessons and remained a long time after the walks. Everybody gave a hand. They installed a nice-looking saddlery, and separated the stalls, initially by means of cleverly braided branches and then with partitions out of wood.

A subscription was launched for the construction of the Olympic riding stables. At that time the lawn of the garden of Armentières was used often as an annex. Von was offering drinks to the riding friends.

And then, the accident: one of the horses of Bernard Vanot, Stormy, a barb not gelded, was the regular riding horse of Eugene. One afternoon he led it to the outdoor arena as he had done so often. The horse was taken one moment of madness, and started to jump like a young goat. Unfortunately Eugene had a Polish saddle with a metal pommel. While being crushed on the metal pommel, Eugene felt such a pain that he decided to throw himself to the ground. M. Tarrette, a farmer neighbor, seeing the scene helped him out. He found the horse a little further eating calmly some bits of grass. Eugene, could not walk any more. Under the pressure of his own weight the bones of his basin had deviated from 7cm. Eugene was immediately hospitalized. The surgeon, Judet, who had the reputation to be “the king of the broken bones”, tucked the whole of the basin in place by grafting a plate. During four months, Eugene had to remain confined to bed. A medical bed was installed in the studio. He could not paint anymore on the easel but continued to draw. He celebrated his 60th birthday lying down. As soon as he was able to walk with crutches, he took again the way to the riding school, then to the outdoor

arena. Again he gave riding lessons, and one day he forgot his crutches at the outdoor arena. His love for horses made him walk again - but the surgeon had told him clearly that he was not to ride again. And my grandfather really never got over it.

At each period of holidays, Eugene returned to the Equestrian Center. He was pleased to saddle on the three Bailleux girls, the brother, and, with the next generation, the Bailleux granddaughters.

When the riding school of Armentières was completed, M. Fages, a former rider of Saumur, in retirement, put his horse in pension and agreed to be an instructor. The horse show of Armentières became famous. More than hundred portraits of horses and numerous sketches were painted from life. For St Georges (the saint patron of the riders), the entire club came to parade in front of the grid of the garden, and formed a guard of honor for Eugene. My grandfather symbolically reviewed them, and my grandmother offered them champagne, opened by a riding friend, M. Carre. In the kitchen, my mother grumbled sometimes: the roast of lamb doesn't wait!

Even though Eugene was no longer riding, happiness was still there: he was pacing up and down the outdoor arena, box of colors and country easel in his cartridge pouch. The paces of the horses of the equestrian center of Armentières dwell in his paintings.

The fate of the Medals

1958 Officier des Palmes Académiques de la France d'Outre-Mer

1959 Médaille d'Or des Arts, Sciences et Lettres

1975 Médaille d'Honneur du Travail

1977 Médaille d'Or du Salon de l'Armée

1988 Médaille d'Or de la Ville de Paris

1998 Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur

2008 : On the occasion of its centennial, Eugene Lelièvre received the highest award honoring a military historian in North America" to The Star Distinguished Service Award of the Military Historians Company.

2009 : Officier de l'Ordre national du Mérite

And also numerous Medals of Honour: those awarded several years in a row by various cities (Sèvres, Passy, Ozoir-la-Ferrière, la Ferté-Lowendal); the Medal of Honour of the Museum of Military History of Châlons-en-Champagne, handed over by "la *Schapska*"; those offered by figurine societies such as "La Sabretache" or "The Friends of the Historical Figurines"; also Medals of Honour from exhibitions; and those given by two regiments (the 17th Regiment of command and support of Maison Lafitte as well as the Medal of Honour of Captain Martin's promotion). To these tributes two worldwide awards can be added; in 1993 the Medal of Honour of the First Worldwide Historical Figurine in Washington DC, handed over to him by Colonel Elting, professor at West Point.

In 1996, in Paris, the Medal of Honour of the French Worldwide Historical Figurine echoes this transatlantic acknowledgment

My grandfather having never taken any steps to obtain these signs of merit, each one testifies of a real tribute that some individuals made a point to honour him with. I am very grateful to each of you.

I grew amongst the medals, the insignias, the rosettes, the banners... For indeed in addition to the whole string of decorations which were given to the painter, there are also the old insignias which he found in the antique markets to enrich his collection of documents, to which it is necessary to add all those methodically sorted out by his son. A whole day would not be enough to enumerate them.

Medals, if it was to keep only one of them –and my paternal grand father would surely understand it - I would chose the one which commemorates the death in deportation of the father of my mother: a medal which the Dubreuil girls bought with their own money.

Only the certificates were provided by the administration. One can undoubtedly regret this stinginess in the symbolic administrative. But, would there not be, also, something of insulting to offer a medal to a widow of war, under the glance of little girls who, in vain, await the return of their father?

Illusion of metal, fetishism of the insignia, vanity of the labels...The heiress of Leliepvre, the last of this family of painters and soldiers, looks at, sadly amused, these rattles for adults which are decorations. How many savageries and murders each one does not cover!! There are little of military audacities which are not bloody for somebody.

In one of my grand father's glass cases, a saber is displayed on which an engraving on the plat can be seen with the words "Public Order". I imagine with horror the sliced arms, the slashed faces and the side's transpierced under the blows of a similar emblem. The "Order" that Men-at-Arms stand up for often had of "Public" only the name.

As soon as the condition of the soldier becomes a profession, as soon as the soldier gets paid, in what way is he different from the mercenary, once the nationalist propaganda is put aside? Who are the soldiers who would remain it, if overnight they became millionaires while being assured to remain it?

The liking for action, including collective, can be differently satisfied; there are the shivers of the sports of the extreme, and better, the exploits of the humanitarian expeditions when those are carried out with a concrete preoccupation for local effectiveness.

From the Army, my grandfather likes discipline, the nobility of the behavior, the comradeship, the solidarity, the sense of efficiency, the liking for adventure, the endurance and the audacity which prepares and stimulates the seriousness of the training.

I am like him, perhaps even more sensitive: military hymns when they are sang in unison, bring tears of enthusiasm to my eyes. But, the wars history and the hindsight of the mind invigorate my vigilance. They always point the compromises of which the politics satiate. In light of this historical awareness, I love and want the army in the museums. Vis-à-vis ordinary soldiers, senior and staff officers, I never feel myself reassured. Too often soldiers obey blindly. However, the history also teaches that never

any social fight, never any claim ingrained in the vital common sense has triumphed without the decisive support of the Armies. The resistance organized within the Armies already had its hours of glory. To be able to disobey, when the unspeakable is commanded, is a civil and moral duty. Except for philosophers who dare to teach it?

97 years old: the snow on the terrace of St Joseph's hospital

Jean Josseau was a close friend of the family, and so to speak the spiritual son of my grandfather. Its own collection of figurines is a succession of masterpieces, unique pieces breathing the exoticism of ornaments and the animal sensuality.

On Thursday, February 24th, 2005 at the time of his funeral ceremony, Eugene, very affected did not want to sit down: tribute paid!

Forty-eight hours later, I was informed in a panic and found my grandfather surrounded by firemen who had sat him on a wheelchair. He was totally speechless, his features fixed, incapable to move his right hand: his right flank was paralyzed, like a statue.

Only his glance remained mobile. Being given his deafness, it was there the thin thread which kept him amongst us. The thread to life was his glance ...

Is it the strain of the funeral tribute added to this melancholic feeling caused by the first year of mourning for his wife? Is it only the cold weather or old age which caused what the doctors call a cerebral vascular accident? In the countryside, one had said that while going to this funeral he "caught his death"; but finally, for Eugene, the Lady in black was satisfied, this time, with a temporary smile.

Alone in his kitchen, during four long hours, he had painfully dragged himself along, on the flank by articulating the left arm which remained free for movement. He thus hoped to reach the door of his apartment. Rosa, his faithful housekeeper, while bringing the mail around 11am, discovered him spread out in the middle of the entrance hall. Since the death of my grand mother, my parents had recommended him several times to carry an alarm, which he had always refused....

I decided to remain. I knew that my grandfather, the day before, was as valid as a 70 year old man. He had to be defended against administrative simplifications which consider as senile a person born in 1908. The nursing staff quickly understood the interest to have somebody next to M. Lelievre, who would speak on his behalf, to compensate the handicap of his deafness during the doctor's consultations.

I knew that recovery was uncertain, that all the functions would perhaps not return. But life for Eugene being painting, I felt that the basic essential was the flexibility of its hand.

Teacher – naïve perhaps – I had my strategy based on the vital power of the desire. On my request, a friend equipped me, as of the following day, with a mini-reader of DVD, with films of horses and dressed up historical reconstruction. I wanted, if the coma threatened, to boost my grandfather with the seduction of the images. He did not need any : three days later he was able to write his signature, and on March 6 (one week after the accident), he drew again its first head of horse, then the whole body of a horse, then a head of his "petites femmes", and then a rider in uniform.

The skills of the hand returned. The words lost in ease. Sometimes he does not recall words, which irritates him; the writing is more difficult too. But the basics are there.

To work upon order

After Eugene's recovery, I often said as a joke, to M. Vullings, one of the collectors from Maastricht, who regularly makes work Eugene since about 15 years "it is us who should pay you for the orders instead!" No doubt that they take part in the balance of life which maintains valiant my grandfather: it is the great Apollonian health of the creators.¹⁵

Eugene Lelievre works exclusively upon order. The desire of the sponsor is his springboard; it is there that the mechanic of its creative imagination is impelled. Volumes are ordered in this constraint, *by* this constraint.

These last years, and particularly after his cerebral accident, I have heard him grumbling several times because too many watercolors were ordered: "Always the same thing" (Hussard, Cuirassier, Timpanist, Spahi...). But it yields there, and in the end, with happiness, once the drawing is built in its head.

Never, could I convince him to decide by himself the subject of a painting,, even by the subterfuge of drawing of possible topics: once at noon, in his kitchen, I had put small papers in the plate commemorating the handing-over of his Legion of Honour (gift of a cousin from Desvres, who in this way marked all the symbolic steps of the life of her Parisian relative).

My grandfather with feigned interest played the game of chances since instead of sticking to the first selected subject he opened them all – perhaps finally to know what would remain in the end (trick of old man!). I don't know what will happen later.

After all, when a mechanic is running smoothly that it maintains nimble the eye, the brain and the hand of a young man almost centenary...one would be wrong undoubtedly to want to transform the dynamics of it.

April 2, 2007, Charles Figes: the loyalty of the German friend

On Wednesday February 21, 2007, while my grandfather, standing by his easel, was cleaning his palette, he loses balance, falls from all his height and breaks the "cotyle" (bone cavity of the hip in which the femur is embedded). He admits to have had the feeling that two men fell with him, at the same time, so much its fall was heavy.

Taken to the emergency room of St Joseph Hospital, Dr Pomme Jouffroy¹⁶ took the decision to keep him for a fortnight at the post-operative orthopedic unit of Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours. As a surgeon, she pointed out, that being given the age of Eugene and his past heart problems, she would not take the risk to operate him if, one way or another, he worsened his fracture. Straight after he spent another fortnight at the clinic Fauvettes in Châtillon.

My grandfather refusing to remain any longer away from his studio, we organize his return for his birthday which he celebrates on Sunday April 1, in the privacy with his closest friends.

¹⁵ In the Nietzsche aesthetics there are two artistic tendencies: that of harmony and clarity which he calls "Apollonian" and, by contrast, that of the rapture and the excess of the instincts that he calls "Dionysian". The style of Eugene Lelievre is Apollonian. The rapture is always disciplined there by harmony.

¹⁶ Daughter of a painter and an active woman, she is namely the writer of a cry of distress: "There is no longer a hospital at the number you have dialed" (Il n'y a plus d'hôpital au numéro que vous avez demandé" (2002, Plon)

I stayed overnight that Sunday at Rue Boileau, to take care, the following day, of some administrative matters. On the morning of April 2nd, official day of the birthday of my grandfather, at 9am, while the statements of the contributions of Eugene to the "Maison des Artistes", spread out by my care, cover, with his bank statements a broad portion of the ground of his studio, a deliveryman comes to give to my grand father a huge presentation of flowered plants. The greeting card is signed: "Faithfully, with admiration, yours Charles". I discover a new part of the life of Eugene: Charles Figes, the German friend.

Raymond Cantois had been called upon as a labor conscript (labor camp) and deported to Germany. In relatively hard material conditions - even if there is no comparison with the horror which prevailed elsewhere - he worked for farmers, who, without being bad fellows benefited, in this way, of chore labor.

The father of Raymond used his pre-war business relationships, to save his son the hardness of this work. A German printer, asserting the expertise in book binding of this French man, obtained that the Cantois son be posted at his place in Marburg, a university town in the north of Frankfort. He did his utmost to have Raymond returned quickly to his family.

When, later, Germany was defeated, the son of this printer of Marburg was amongst the soldiers prisoners employed in the zones for mine clearance. Fearing with reason for the life of his boy, the German printer asked Raymond's father to intervene so that he be quickly transferred elsewhere. What the father Cantois did, obviously, with the deepest feeling of gratitude by accommodating him in his own industrial book binding workshop, 32 boulevard Ménilmontant

Charles Figes was Francophile. He did not have any difficulty to be integrated into the Cantois business. Talented draftsman, he was copying wonderfully the luxurious editions which reproduced the works of libraries, no longer available. So that he would feel more at ease the family gave him a room in a part of the studio. There he starts a small printing and book binding business. Quickly a love affair begins between him and one of the employees. The joy of the recovered peace multiplies tenfold the pleasure.

The young woman's profile becomes round around the belly. Charles decides to fix himself definitively in France where he soon will set up his own printing workshop. He specializes first in the calendars then in ornamental prints. Charles Figes, often orders then illustrations from Eugene. Then, it is Eugene who introduces him to M. Gillet and M. Fualdès for the making of the uniform cards included in the small Historex plastic bags.

One of the rare true photographs catching my grand father painting shows, in the foreground, Charles Figes, sitting near him, a brush also in hand. It was in Armentières. Often the three friends, Raymond, Charles and Eugene found themselves there. Intelligence and passion do not know the borders ... In complicity, the years went by; his smile is intact in this gracious gesture.

"To do one's best, without worrying about time"

Eugene Lelievre paints upon order, keeps voluntarily his prices low (precisely so that his order book is always full) and, once the work is finished, ignores the commercial aspect of it, because he hates to bargain and even more to canvass ... M. Nonce Barone

whispered me that my grandmother often said to him “If I were not there, we would have ended up under the bridges”. In the singular conversations –half-spoken, half-written- which Eugene is having with his many collectors and friends, each time an intuitive and precise dialogue is established: it is half way a communication between knowledge and infra-conceptuality where a few words are enough to find the pictorial range of the understanding.

The “fans of uniforms” gossip in his studio. For them, the depths of his documentation pour their treasures: more than eighty years of archives –the work of a life!

His desk is the theatre of an imaginary soldier without dead or warrior. On a cavalry charge, painted in May 2006, it is the trumpet in hand which denies the first place to the saber. The music leads the attack.

Violence is a rhythm, a barbarian dance. The battle is spectacle.

Seek in the paintings of Eugene, never has he killed in it. When the bodies fall under the impact the wounded can always be raised...

His art, so military, is the living and solar memory of a survivor.

May 8, 2007

Sylvie Lelievre Botton

EUGENE LELIEPVRE BY HIMSELF

Why and how I make mannequins

Letter published in 1991 in the bulletin of “La Sabretache”, for the commemoration of the Centenary.

M. President and dear Friend,

You have asked me how and why I started to make those little mannequins, which I admit it, have a lot of successes, and belong to my activity of artist. The answer seems easy and yet I hesitate to do so as much “the adventure” is overlapping to my life, as well as painting. I will have to speak about myself, something I do not like at all. Please excuse this kind of narcissism which I cannot avoid and which, perhaps, gives too much importance, all in all, to one of the facets of the works of a painter.

As far as I can remember I always drew soldiers and horses. My childhood as experienced, one moment, in the middle of the combats of 1914, then close to the firing line, had a great impact on me and, very young, I was a military painter and a figurinist without realizing it : did I not sell in 1915 - I was seven years old - my first painting of cavalry? And done, then, so many small warlike dioramas made out of shoeboxes of which I lowered a flap and which I animated with characters drawn and cut out of paper.

I was, when peace returned, a regular visitor of the Detaille's hall at the Invalides, and an admirer of the great works of this artist. The French Army was my delight. Rider as of my adolescence, in love with the horses as I always was, and still I am, only the cavalry interested me. I gained experience at the 11th cuirassier, and then went on to the 10th colonial artillery to familiarize myself with another horsemanship. And I always drew horses and soldiers.

When in 1942, weakened and returned to civilian life, I registered myself at "La Sabretache" following the advice of Commandant Bucquoy with whom I recently got in touch; it is especially because I felt the need for more solid and varied foundations than those which were enough for me hitherto. I attached more and more importance to military paintings, and started to take part in publications requiring other uniformologic ways than those which retained the one who only wanted to know about the cavalry of the Ancien Régime.

For the military painter, the reflection of the reality which he wishes for his work can be obtained only by the study on nature. If for the witness of its time it is relatively easy, it is not the same anymore for the archaeologist. I was confronted very early with this problem. Having some old clothing, I was never able to take advantage from it as well as by their fragility as by the astonishing narrowness of their measurements, more suitable for a frail young girl than for a strong soldier. Moreover the fragmentary of these relics made it compulsory for me to add more or less successful accessories. Something was always missing, and imagination is not always enough. If a modern jacket can, if need be, imitate the fall from the shoulder of a fur-trimmed coat, how to give truth to the fold of a jerkin that is nowhere to be seen. And for the harness, almost impossible to find? From there the ideas to put together complete sets, man and horse. And this on a small scale.

Time, indeed, was not any more of the spacious studios where the military painter had well supplied quartermaster's stores doubled by a big arsenal – the whole at real size – with which he could dress up the living model. Admittedly, museums present now in a very realistic way the uniforms of the past.

It was still different only a little while ago, the lifeless pieces hanging in narrow glass cases were of a limited utility for those who wanted to walk around. I thus dreamed of a scale-down museum when I had the pleasure, at my first visit to our master of us all, Lucien Rousselot, to see that he had carried out one with his usual precision for his own use. This started, for me, the latent idea. Interested for a long time by the costumes I already had a good background. I had made patterns, taken measurements and sketches whenever I met people. I had found the "Art du Tailleur" of M. de Garsault, the "Bulletins de la Société du Costume" which give some good patterns of uniforms, other works of Maurice Leloir, Jacques Rupert, and albums of Delaistre which suited me perfectly. It was already a good score of references.

A decision had to be made about the scale. Considering only the cavalry, a mold of my horse of Mène that I had and intended to use was fifteen centimeters for one meter. To reduce measurements and patterns at that scale were easy, to find fabrics, braids fine enough to adjust to it was less easy. The question of the colors was essential; the dyeing which existed then made the deal. Time, alas, gave shades, which makes the delights of the antique dealer but feel a little reluctant for the painter. To consider the armaments was not a problem, documentation being numerous. As for manufacturing it... But it is

while forging that one becomes blacksmith, and if my first sabre is far from being good, I made some progress since. To equip my horse, I already had a lot of information for saddlery and harness.

Museums realized of the distinct preference of the visitors for similar representations in three dimensions rather than for the flat figures, so perfect they might be. I was in charge by such organizations, in the United States as well as in Canada, to carry out many figurines of this kind, French troops which landed on their soil. They often are next to paintings of the same signatory and same subjects, which do not profit from a similar interest of the public.

I believe that the reduced mannequin, just like the full-scale figurine, will in the future hold more and more importance for the spectators. The format of these models offers so much more facility of reading that they quite naturally place themselves at a more instructive level. One clearly sees there the difference between a piping and a braid, which is not of no importance.

The mannequins have, it appears to me, the advantage on the figurines, providing that they do not sacrifice anything to the accuracy which is essential to justify the attention they catch for being more lifelike in the sense that the fabric is fabric, leather, is leather and metal the material even which it represents. No painting here. No cheating or trompe-l'oeil, only the reality.

I am very optimistic about the future. We have the so meticulous successes of Daniel Le Peletier who is doing credit to his master.

We have also Dominique Billiet, who continues to surprise us because his talent is tremendous. Or Christian Rocheron, whose sophisticated reconstructions of weapons are masterpieces of great skillfulness, and who also approached the little mannequin. There are also others of which I regret not knowing the name.

And for the large figurines, amongst the best, those of Jean Josseau seem to me to answer by its concern for perfection, its research, so that one can expect for a piece important by its size, as documented as picturesque and being quite unusual.

I would like to also quote the glamorous ones and attractive figurines of Jacques Beauvuin which fill me with enthusiasm each time I see them and which is a perfect link between the two disciplines. I had the joy of having some students in these particularly difficult fields, and I will be always happy to applaud the attempts –I wish them many of the young candidates for the take-over.

I overlooked the numerous sleepless nights thinking about the solutions of the problems, the mistakes, the errors which can jeopardize the whole business, incidents which still exist and which the gained experience is not enough to control so much the way of dealing escapes the formulations which would dictate ideal guidelines without risks.

I forgot to insist on the necessity of bringing much personality to the humdrum routine, quite necessary too. It is always necessary, to avoid the dressed up doll, to give much life, if one can say, to clothing: that they weigh, that they seem to have aged on their character and thus to place the folds only after having carefully thought of their meaning as well as their attitude.

All that requires much time, but this one does not count.

Being unable to thread a needle myself, the excellent dressmaker who is my wife got convinced to help me. Without her invaluable ability, these lines that you address me, Mon Commandant, the great honor to ask me, could never have been written. I would be pleased that they will arouse, amongst our young fellows, the passion which will give them, I hope for it, as many satisfactions as those which are mine, ours, during so many years of team work for the continuation of the figurine really historical, that is to say the whole truth, respectful of reality, combining the most scrupulous documentary concern, with the charm of an art object.

Please forgive me for this long letter and accept, Mon Commandant, the expression of my devoted and cordially friendly feelings.

Eugene Lelievre

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many friends' first names are missing, as well as the names of prominent persons who accompany or have accompanied the career of Eugene Lelievre. That those who are still amongst us forgive my oversight. There will be other occasions, still, of speaking about you and him.

However, by gratitude to have so spontaneously lent me the photographs of the works of my grandfather of which they became the owners, I make a point of quoting three of his customers and collectors friends: Mr. et Mrs. Junius from Enghien, in Belgium, Mr. Jacques Vullings from Maastricht and Mr. Nonce Barone from Rambouillet.

I thank also General Masson who leaves, this year, his functions at the "Délégation du Patrimoine de l'Armée de Terre" (The Delegation of the Heritage of the Army), to have chosen to pay a tribute to my grand father at the Salon of the Army.

I will not close this biography without greeting the unfailing loyalty of Mr. and Mrs. Connan, as well as the warmth of Mrs. Simone Josseau and the gourmand attentions of Mrs. Caroline Barone. Lastly, the life of Eugene, in his studio of the fourth floor, would undoubtedly not be so serene without the smile of Rosa who brings his mail every morning.

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