

Leonor Fini

Menagerie

April 2 – May 2, 2026

Opening Reception: Thursday, April 2, 6–8pm

297 Tenth Avenue, New York

Olney Gleason is pleased to present an exhibition of paintings and works on paper by Leonor Fini (1907–1996). On view from April 2 through May 2, 2026, *Leonor Fini: Menagerie* brings together a selection of work spanning the genres of portraiture, literary and erotic drawings, and original set and costume designs. The exhibition anticipates a major retrospective organized by the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt in October 2026 that will travel to the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris in 2027.

Fini approached the figure through sustained observation, moving between commissioned portraiture, literary illustration, and her own mythological and erotic compositions. Several of the paintings on view date to the 1930s and 1940s, a period in which Fini's handling of oil paint drew from the Old Masters she had studied in her youth in Trieste. The earliest painting on view, the little-seen *Portrait de Victoria Pini* (1936), represents Fini's success as a portraitist after moving to Paris in the 1930s. Painted as Fini garnered recognition for her commissions by Parisian high society, this painting dates to a period that birthed Fini's signature portrait style, and it further marks a rare instance in which the artist created a portrait at her own volition.

A group of works from 1986 relate to Fini's illustrations for a deluxe edition of Baudelaire's *Oeuvres complètes*, published by Éditions André Sauret, Monaco. Executed in oil on paper, these small-scale paintings revisit the theatrical figuration that occupied Fini throughout her career. The subjects – cloaked performers, nocturnal gatherings, solitary women – are treated with an intensity suited to the scale of the page. Other paintings and works on paper on view reflect Fini's fascination with witches, who recur in her paintings and drawings across decades. Ink drawings dating from the 1950s through the 1980s extend this interest in the figure through fluid, economical line. Working in ink, wash, and watercolor, Fini rendered groups of women, mythological scenes, and erotic subjects with a draftsmanship shaped by decades of sustained figural practice.

Also on view will be a selection of set and costume designs for stage productions including Jean Anouilh's *Les Demoiselles de la nuit* (1948) and the artist's own *La Rêve de Leonor* (1949). After World War II, while continuing to paint, Fini designed costumes and sets for theater, ballet, and film. These designs reflect the inventive spirit of an artist whose creativity converged at the boundary between art and life.

About Leonor Fini

Born in Buenos Aires in 1907, Fini was raised in Trieste, Italy, where her mother had fled the artist's father shortly after her birth. Largely self-taught, Fini studied the Italian Mannerists and began exhibiting in Trieste and Milan before relocating to Paris in 1931 at the encouragement of Giorgio de Chirico. She was included in the Museum of Modern Art's landmark exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* in 1936 and held her first New York solo exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in 1938, with an introduction by de Chirico. Her practice encompassed painting, drawing, book illustration, costume and set design for theater, ballet, opera, and film. Among her many collaborators and subjects were Leonora Carrington, Max Ernst, and Jean Genet.

In her lifetime, Fini was the subject of retrospective exhibitions in Belgium, Italy, Japan, and France. Posthumous institutional presentations include exhibitions in Germany, Sweden, Italy, and the United States, as well as prominent inclusion in *Surrealism*, Centre Pompidou, Paris; *Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique*, Brussels; *Fundación MAPFRE*, Madrid; *Hamburger Kunsthalle*, Hamburg and the *Philadelphia Museum of Art (2024–26)*, *Surrealism Beyond Borders* at *Tate Modern* and *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2021–22)* and *The Milk of Dreams*, the 59th Venice Biennale (2022). A catalogue raisonné of the artist's oil paintings, authored by Richard Overstreet and Neil Zukerman, was published in 2021, and her personal papers and library are now held in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University.

Fini lived and worked in Paris until her death in 1996. Her work is held in the collections of *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*; *Tate Modern, London*; *Centre Pompidou, Paris*; the *Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice*; and *Museo Revoltella, Trieste*, among others

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