



Fondation Custodia

121 rue de Lille, Paris VII

CHARLES DONKER

3 December 2021

Always Looking

Young Tawny Owl, 1976
Etching. – 238 x 234 mm

Every day except Monday,
12 – 6 pm

3 April 2022

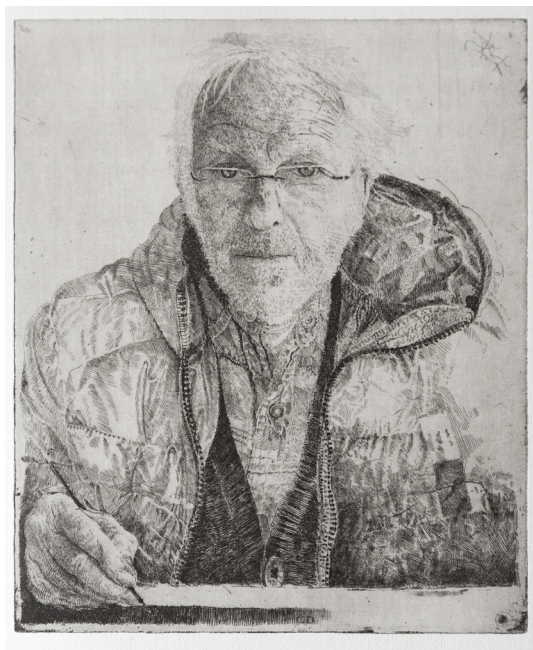
EXHIBITION AT THE FONDATION CUSTODIA

from 3 December 2021 to 3 April 2022

Charles Donker · Always Looking Etchings, Drawings, Watercolours

CONCURRENTLY with *True to Nature. Open-air Painting 1780-1870*, the Fondation Custodia is exhibiting the work of Charles Donker (born in 1940 in Utrecht, the Netherlands).

Donker's technique, and the renowned delicacy of his work, place him among the greatest Dutch graphic artists of his time. A significant number of his works has been collected by museums, in particular the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Centraal Museum in Utrecht, and also the Fondation Custodia in Paris.



1. *Self-portrait in Padded Jacket*, 2019 (unfinished). Etching. – 248 x 207 mm
Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Thanks to a selection made by Ger Luijten (director of the Fondation Custodia) and Jan Piet Filedt Kok (former director of collections at the Rijksmuseum), more than 150 works will be shown in the lower ground floor rooms of the Hôtel Lévis-Mirepoix. Featuring mainly etchings, the exhibition will also present (for the first time) drawings and watercolours. The group of works to be exhibited cover the fifty years of the artist's career.

Charles Donker works principally 'on the spot'. 'I do not know how to be anywhere other than out of doors', the draughtsman and printmaker confesses. 'I need to see the sky, hear the rustling of the trees, watch the birds flying about and experience nature's profound silence. I would be seriously unhappy if I could no longer go outside'.

This 'outside' can be located anywhere. Donker has travelled in France, England, Spain, Poland, Latin America and Israel.

At Rhijnauwen, in the Netherlands, Donker has been working since 1970 in the former dwelling of a forester. 'I have made many etchings of the landscape around the studio. It's mixed woodland and farmland: behind a group of trees there is a hedge, and behind the hedge another line of trees. A group of horizontal lines with



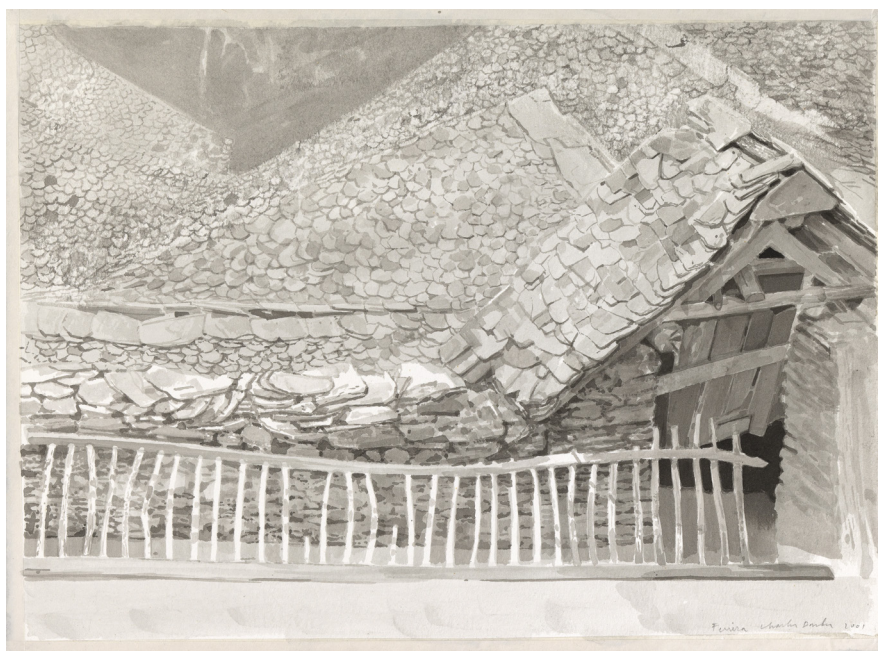
2. Study of Bromelia, Ecuador, 2003
Watercolour. – 300 x 400 mm
Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt,
Paris

meadows in between. I like things that are straight and well-balanced, horizontally or vertically’.

Sometimes a tree is the sole subject of a print. But it has first to have shed its leaves. A tree cannot be a model for him in summer time. ‘It is very difficult to represent a tree in leaf’, Donker explains. ‘Also, I cannot draw anything from my imagination. I need to have everything before my eyes. I really look hard at the tree’.

The great landscape artists of the nineteenth century made sketches *en plein air*, then re-worked them in the studio. Donker’s view is that ‘what is done on the spot is generally the best. That’s why I prefer etching directly on to the plate. When things are going well, I am completely absorbed in what I do. A feeling of happiness pervades. Time no longer exists, I feel completely at ease and happy’.

Working from nature offers this additional reward.

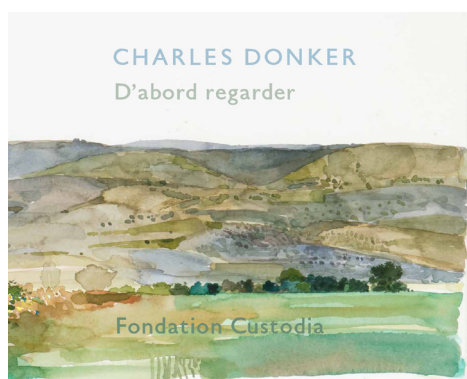


3. Barn in Farrera, Pyrenees, 2001
Brush and Chinese ink. – 283 x 384 mm
Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt,
Paris

A print by Charles Donker is a summary of events observed over a few days, in places where almost nothing exists but the place itself. The slightest motion is forbidden. Donker thinks birds fly too fast for his taste, he can only represent them when they are very close and make no movement of wing or claw for a long stretch of time. In general, this means they are dead.

Donker makes us see what he has seen. He wants to share with us the beauty of what he has observed, the beauty of nature. At this exhibition, those who know Charles Donker only as a printmaker will discover a completely different aspect of his talent. The landscapes of Spain and Latin America demonstrate the colourist dormant within him, through a selection of watercolours, wash drawings and pencil sketches.

Ger Luijten adds that 'Charles Donker has always been responsive to seventeenth-century prints and drawings and has understood that art on paper, thanks to materials and techniques that have remained essentially unchanged, is timeless; it is particularly in keeping with works that are several centuries old.



Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue by Jan Piet Filedt Kok, Ger Luijten and Gijsbert van der Wal, who interviewed the artist at several occasions about his work. Part of the quotes in this communiqué come from these conversations.

Charles Donker. D'abord regarder

Jan Piet Filedt Kok, Ger Luijten, Gijsbert van der Wal

Paris, Fondation Custodia, 2021

224 pp., 200 colour illustrations, 24 x 30 cm, hardcover

French edition ISBN 978 90 6868 852 8 | Dutch edition ISBN 978 90 6868 851 1

€ 34,50

The Dutch Institute for Art History in the Netherlands (RKD) has published an online catalogue raisonné of the prints of Charles Donker, compiled by Jan Piet Filedt Kok: <https://charlesdonker.rkdstudies.nl/contents/>.

TWO EXHIBITIONS AT THE FONDATION CUSTODIA

from 3 December 2021
to 3 April 2022
Fondation Custodia, Paris

Practical Information

EXHIBITIONS

True to Nature. Open-air Painting 1780-1870
3 December 2021 to 3 April 2022

Charles Donker. Always Looking
3 December 2021 to 3 April 2022

OPENING HOURS

Every day except Monday, from 12 to 6 pm

ADMISSION CHARGES

Full price € 10 / Reduced € 7
The entrance ticket gives access to both exhibitions.

LOCATION

Fondation Custodia
121, rue de Lille – 75007 Paris – France
www.fondationcustodia.fr

ACCESS BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Metro: Assemblée Nationale (line 12) or Invalides (lines 8 and 13, RER C)
Bus 63, 73, 83, 84, 94: Assemblée Nationale

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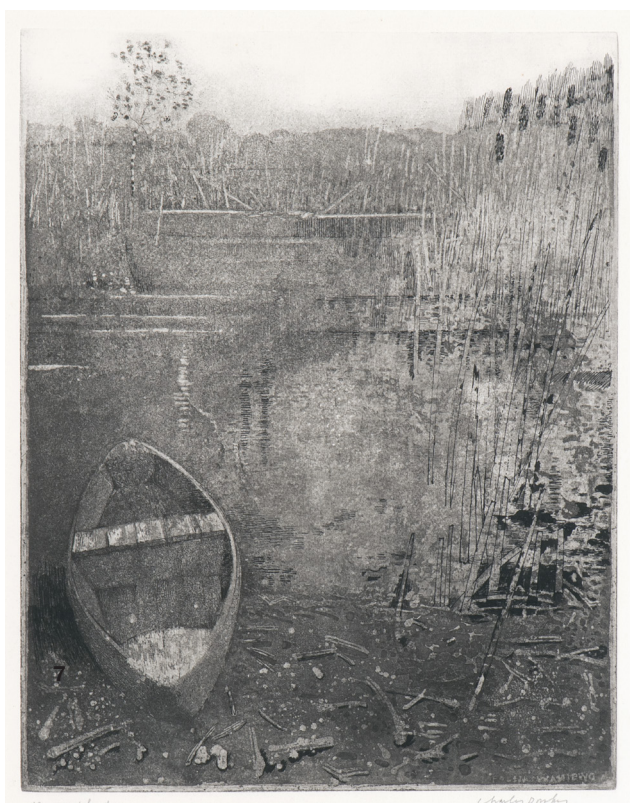
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Landscape in Groningen: Hoog Watum, 1972. Etching. – 134 x 236 mm
Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris



5

Poles in the Groningen Mudflat, 1988. Etching. – 298 x 362 mm
Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris



6

Punter in Waniewo, Poland, 1992. Etching and aquatint, reworked in pen and Chinese ink. – 252 x 201 mm. Collection Ger Luijten, Paris

Images Available
to the Press

Charles Donker
Always Looking



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Barn Owl Box on a Pole, Hula Valley, Israel, 2009
Watercolour. – 282 x 374 mm. Artist's collection



8

Hay-stacks near Leermens, 1980s. Brush and Chinese ink. – 282 x 362 mm
Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris



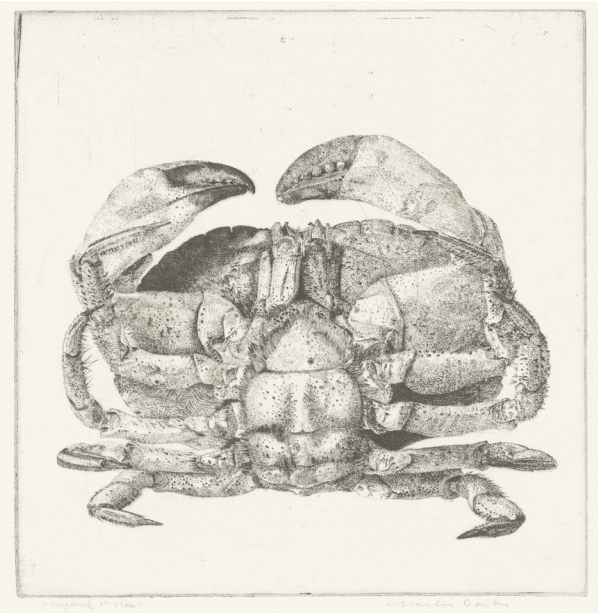
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Cloud Forest: Trees in Tropical Forest near Utuana, Ecuador, 2003
Watercolour. – 300 x 400 mm. Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris



10

Young Tawny Owl, 1976. Etching. – 238 x 234 mm
Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris



11

Crab ("Cancer Pagurus") in a Box, November 1971. Etching. – 205 x 201 mm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (Gift J. P. Filedt Kok, Amsterdam, 2009)



12

Shot Hare, 1979. Etching. – 212 x 285 mm. Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris



13

Young Plantations, 1976. Brush and Chinese ink. – 286 x 376 mm
Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris



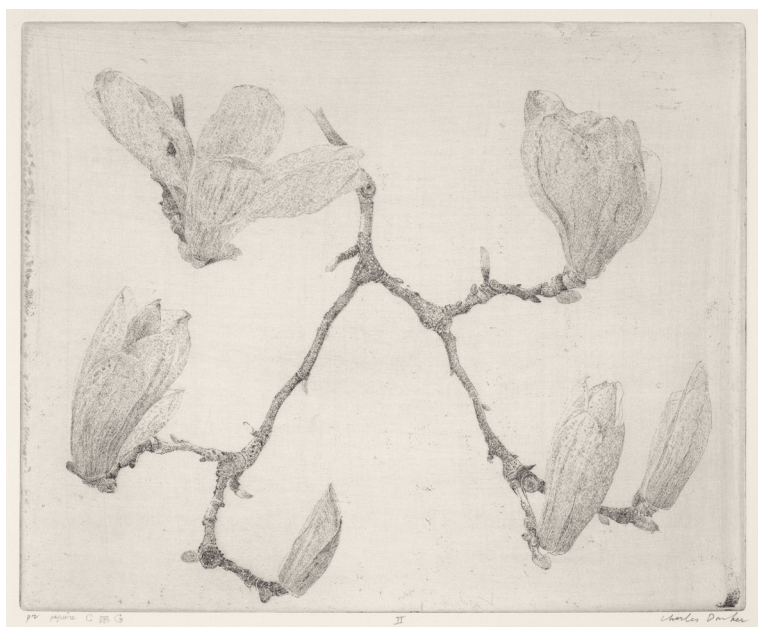
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Ridderoord Woods, 2003. Etching. – 237 x 297 mm
Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

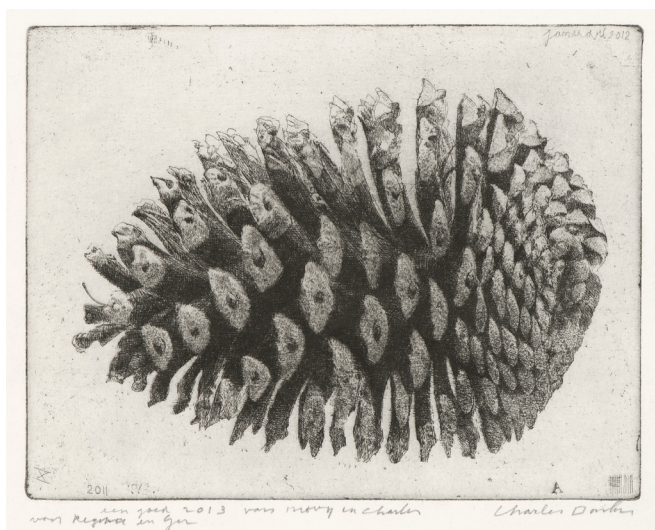


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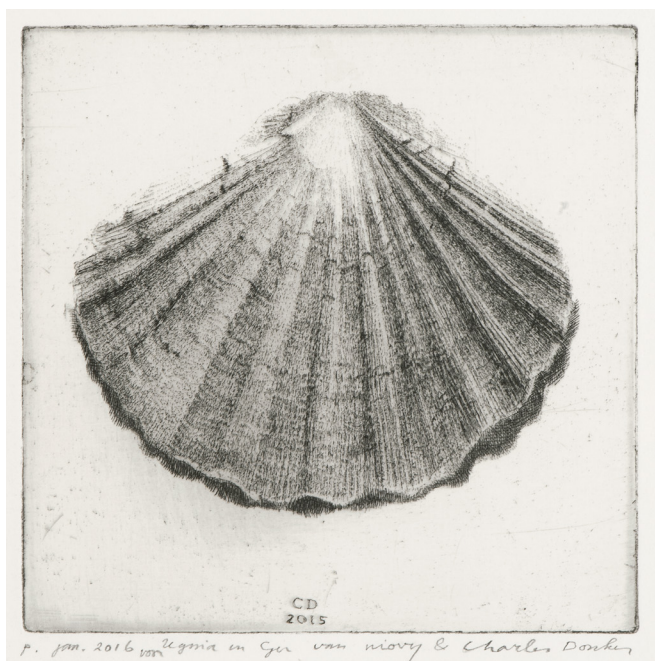
Pile of Wood with Reed and a Beehive, c. 1992
Etching. – 297 x 394 mm. Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris



16 *Magnolia II*, 2008. Etching. – 240 x 295 mm. Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris



17 *Pine Cone V*, 2011-12. Etching. – 125 x 163 mm. Collection Ger Luijten, Paris



18 *Shell*, 2015 (New Year's greetings 2016)
Etching. – 134 x 134 mm. Collection Ger Luijten, Paris