

MUSIC BOX FILMS PRESENTS

S raphine

Written and directed by Martin Provost
Starring Yolande Moreau and Ulrich Tukur
125 minutes. Unrated. In French with English subtitles.

Please download photos at: www.musicboxfilms.com

**Winner – Seven C sars (French Academy Awards) for
Best Film, Best Actress, Best Original Screenplay, Best Music, Best
Cinematography, Best Set Design and Best Costumes**

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Cast

Séraphine	Yolande Moreau
Wilhelm Uhde	Ulrich Tukur
Anne Marie	Anne Bennent
Madame Duphot	Geneviève Mnich
Helmut	Nico Rogner
Minouche	Adélaïde Leroux
Duval	Serge Larivière
Mère Supérieure	Françoise Lebrun

Technical Crew

Directed by Martin Provost	
Producers	Miléna Poylo and Gilles Sacuto
Screenplay	Martin Provost and Marc Abdelnour
Cinematography	Laurent Brunet (AFC)
Sound	Philippe Van den Driessche
Set Designer	Thierry François
Editing	Ludo Troch
Original Score	Michael Galasso
Casting	Brigitte Moidon (ARDA)
First Assistant Director	Raphaëlle Piani
Continuity Assistant	Christine Catonné Raffa
Sound editing	Ingrid Ralet
Mixing	Emmanuel Croset
Production Director	Nathalie Duran
Production Manager	Julian Bouley

A TS Productions production

Co-produced with France 3 Cinéma, Climax Films (Belgique) and RTBF (Belgium TV)

With the participation of Canal+, Cinécinéma, TV5 Monde

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Synopsis

SERAPHINE centers on Séraphine de Senlis (Yolande Moreau), a simple housekeeper whose brilliantly colorful canvases adorn some of the most famous galleries in the world. Wilhelm Uhde, a German art critic and collector (Ulrich Ukur) discovers her paintings while she is working for him as a maid in Senlis near Paris in the early part of the 20th century. Martin Provost's fictionalized and tragic portrait of this forgotten painter is a testament to creativity and the resilience of one woman's spirit.

In 1913, the German collector Wilhelm Uhde, the first Picasso buyer and discoverer of acclaimed naïve primitive painter Le Douanier Rousseau, rents an apartment in Senlis in order to write and take a break from his Parisian life. He hires a cleaning lady, Séraphine, 48 years old. Some time later, while visiting the home of a prominent local family, he notices a small painting on wood. His surprise is great when he finds out that it is by none other than Séraphine. A poignant and unexpected relationship then develops between the avant-garde art dealer and the visionary cleaning lady.

Interview with writer-director Martin Provost

How did you discover Séraphine Louis?

One day, a friend of mine who is a radio producer at one prominent French station France Culture told me in a rather enigmatic way: "Martin, you should take interest in Séraphine Louis..." Not knowing who this figure was, I didn't really understand where this was leading to, but she added: "Do some research, and you will understand why." I found very little information on the Internet, just a few biographical details, some puzzling paintings. Enough to trigger my curiosity. And so I started to enter Séraphine's very unusual universe. Very soon, it was obvious to me there was something there that was very strong, poignant and worthy of cinema... This first impression just grew, it even became an obsession later on as I read everything there was to read about her, including the thesis about Séraphine that was written by Françoise Cloarec, a psychiatrist, who used to know Anne-Marie Uhde (Wilhelm Uhde's sister, the one who discovered Séraphine) and whose letters she owns, in addition to many other documents. Her work was my main source.

In the film's beginning, there was another decisive encounter, the one with Yolande Moreau.

Yes, meeting Yolande was incredibly decisive. I never would have made this film without her. The writing of the script itself, long before the search for producers began, was nourished by her presence at my side. As fate would have it, we both live in the countryside, three kilometers from one another. So we met very quickly. I told her Séraphine's story and she said yes. That's all there was to it. Later on, in the Kandinsky library, I found the only known portrait of Séraphine, which was done in pencil by one of her neighbors. The resemblance is even more striking. It was Yolande Moreau.

When I showed her this portrait, she was speechless at first, but then added off-handedly "It's not flattering, but it is me indeed!" We then talked a lot about Séraphine, about what she had probably confronted in her life, we imagined her childhood... And then on the set, some sort of miracle took place, a real meeting between a historical figure and an actress. Yolande does not perform, she embodies Séraphine. She manages to leave an imprint on the images and, as the movie unfolds, a poetic and emotional charge that is all the more intense and precious as she is always performing with restraint. Our work was indeed always based on remaining on the edge, in never giving way to easiness, to sentimentality, nor to hysteria which is often associated with the representation of insanity in films.

It was about withholding instead of layering on, and about remaining faithful throughout to our common vision of the character: of her exacting course, of her weaknesses, of her courage, in other words, everything that had impressed and moved us in Séraphine.

You wrote your screenplay after these two meetings took place. That was also, once again, the story of an encounter...

The pitfalls of a screenplay based on a real character lie in it remaining anecdotal, illustrative, of skirting, in fact, what creates her mystery: her humanity, her contradictions, her inner life. It was a very delicate process. A screenplay is not a work in and of itself. But it must be sufficiently pleasant to read in order to hope getting a producer's attention and finding funding. It's a backbone, a working tool. After trying to gather the greatest amount of information about Séraphine's life, and especially after meeting Yolande, I was impatient to start working and full of apprehension. But I very soon felt that Séraphine was an ally, that she was allowing me to enter her world—a harsh world, that is puzzling, grappling with the invisible. It felt like I was making the journey with her.

With Marc Abdelnour, who collaborated on the screenplay, we immediately imposed a constraint on ourselves, that is to not "describe" Séraphine's life as a series of strong moments—in fact, what was interesting to me was to structure the narration on little nothings, on what happens outside the frame, on absences, to create little mysteries. Another writing choice, I wanted to focus above all on the unexpected relationship, both ambiguous and prudish, which linked Séraphine to Wilhelm Uhde during more than 20 years as well as for posterity. It was an improbable encounter between two marginal people. Against all expectations, it turned out to be decisive for both of them. Séraphine lives on the outskirts of society, and Uhde, the homosexual foreigner, is the first to see her for who she really is, without any prejudice. He is her revealer, her mentor, her friend, her dealer and, as I felt it, almost her fiancé. It's interesting to see how he disappears and reappears into her life, always at the right time, like a messenger in an ancient tragedy. He is the underlying reason for a lot of the things that happened during Séraphine's lifetime, and afterwards, he perpetuated her memory by exposing her to the wider public, since he was the first one to finally organize, in 1945, an exhibition entirely focused on her work, which then led to others all over the world.

Let's go back to the beginning of your interest in Séraphine. What moved you the most about her? Her personality? A personal sensitivity for "naïve," spontaneous, non-academic painting?

I myself used to paint a lot at one time, without having had any particular training and I remember one day, after hours of concentration and hard work, being afraid—yes, an irrational fear and a feeling of immense solitude. I haven't touched a paintbrush since then. What drew me to Séraphine, it sounds silly to say, was a kind of soul proximity, and also admiration, a form of curiosity that I've always felt for everything that stems from pure creativity, from the creative burst. Some will call this "naïve" art, others "art brut" or "outsider art" but it's just a question of categories. Today, as in the past, there are often people who are not erudite, who were not born in favorable circumstances, or close to culture, but who carry within themselves this incredible creative capacity, irrepressible and disturbing at times. These artists are like deep-sea fishermen, far from artistic evolutions and turmoil, with no teachers or disciples, and they don't always get the recognition they deserve.

Séraphine is a visionary in the powerful sense of the word. She let herself be carried by something that was stronger than she was, that she did not control, at the risk of destroying herself. This moved me deeply.

Your film illustrates very well the quasi-mystical dimension of Séraphine's work. She seems to paint as if her life depended on it, as though she was performing a religious ritual. Painting is never a gratuitous act...

It can be for some! And that's just fine. But in Séraphine's universe, painting is as vital as eating or drinking, I would go even further since after Wilhelm Uhde's departure, she renounced the minimal material comfort she could afford thanks to her housecleaning in order to devote herself to painting body and soul. It was Picasso who said: "If I don't paint, I'll get sick, I'll die."

Séraphine is like that. Painting enables her to maintain something vital within herself. It is one of the conditions of her survival, it is impossible for her to stop and do something other than create. Within this context, the ritual is indeed very important, and I took great care in highlighting this every time it was possible: these numerous rituals, religious and others, were in fact a way of disciplining one's life. That is how I wanted to illustrate it.

Wilhelm Uhde, who was no church mouse, used to say of Séraphine that she was like a saint, and I believe him. Séraphine had reached, through her fierce perseverance in her work, and through that sort of passive revolt that was hers, a form of saintliness expressed through her painting.

During the late twenties, Séraphine became relatively famous. And then, with the advent of both the economic and a personal crisis, Uhde practically abandons her. After having given her everything, he seems to lose interest in her.

That's the character's dark side. I didn't try to evade it. But in the movie, it was more interesting in my opinion not to give any explanation for that strange behavior. It's up to the viewer to make his or her perception. Séraphine's demise at the Clermont-de-l'Oise psychiatric hospital during the Second World War was rather sordid. It is very disturbing. In his autobiography, Uhde claims that she died in 1934, whereas she lived there for another eight years, until 1942. Lie or oversight, I've often wondered about that... In fact, after the First World War and his return to France where he settled once again with his sister, Wilhelm Uhde does not even try to see Séraphine again although he lives just a dozen kilometers away from Senlis! In one scene, I have him say that he is convinced Séraphine is dead, but with Ulrich Tukur (who plays Wilhelm's role) we wanted to make sure the character would say this without believing it too much himself. That ambiguity maintains the character's complexity. Despite his integrity and the moral strength he demonstrated during his entire life, he is riddled by guilt and by a certain form of powerlessness, even a bit of cowardice—it's an important dimension of the character and of his relationship to Séraphine and to things. Uhde had inner demons. They are there in filigree during the entire film. I had no intention of confining him to the role of the faithful and benevolent patron and friend, of a simple foil.

For me, the zones of shadow in Wilhelm's life were fundamental in order to rebalance, so to speak, the couple he forms on the screen with Séraphine, to ensure that his character is not smothered by her.

Your directing is very respectful of the characters, and never demonstrative...

That apparent simplicity demands a lot of work and a constant attention to detail during each stage of the film's making. I felt very quickly, that for this film, the directing had to be sober and rigorous, slightly withdrawn, similar to Séraphine, in order to help the audience walk along with her with ease. My function was to be at the characters' "service" and to give Séraphine her proper place. It was not always easy. I surrounded myself with very talented collaborators who seemed to go in that direction. Whether it be for the costumes, the sets, or the lighting, we were intent on making sure that everything was a bit "withdrawn." A general desire for sobriety and discretion; the least amount of effects. I was very demanding regarding the choice of colors for instance: no warm colors excepting Séraphine's painting, neither on the sets, nor on the costumes. Some green, blue, black, but no white. Very little camera movement, not standing too close to the actors, not lighting them too much, not cropping more than necessary. In fact, when Michel Saint-Jean, the French distributor of Séraphine, first saw the film, he told me what, in my eyes, is the nicest of compliments. He told me "it's a humble film." That sentence has a lot of significance for me.

The film had an extension. More than sixty years after the one organized by Uhde at the Galerie de France, an exhibition was devoted to Séraphine, and only her, in Paris....

Séraphine lives again with the film. During her lifetime, she didn't get the one-person show she had so much hoped for. I made it a point to have her work exhibited in Paris once again. Thanks to Dina Vierny and to her son, Olivier Lorquin, an exhibition took place at the Musée Maillol: indeed, after his death, Dina Vierny bought Uhde's collection from Anne-Marie, his sister, which helped her to survive, and enabled the Musée Maillol to enrich itself with numerous works. There was also a Wilhelm Uhde room at the Musée d'Art Moderne, with several very beautiful paintings by Séraphine. This room was recreated in the Senlis museum. The paintings were brought together for the exhibition. Unfortunately, many of Séraphine's paintings were destroyed. At the time, a lot of people thought they had no value. Now I hope Séraphine's work can—and will—live once again in broad daylight; outside the connoisseurs' circle.

What message, according to you, does Séraphine's life and work give us?

She was a free woman above all. This can seem contradictory, considering that she lived three fourths of her life alone, chaste, and in a state of great physical and psychological destitution, and that she ended up committed in a mental institution! Séraphine was a simple cleaning lady—worse, a handy woman—who painted extraordinary things in secret and who was the butt of all jokes. She represented at the time what was the lowest on the social ladder. But she didn't care. Nothing stopped her. She was able to preserve her autonomy in spite of everything, her inner life's abundance in the secret of her little room, even if it meant accepting performing the most thankless jobs. She paid for it dearly when she spent her last resources during the early thirties. Insanity was a refuge.

During the too brief years of artistic development and relative affluence she experienced in the late twenties, Séraphine was convinced about her future glory! For me, from that point of view, her process was purely poetical: she stayed in the world of childhood, of the wonderful...

With almost nothing, she was able to give meaning to her life, to instill a long drawn out dynamic into it, in spite of the hardships, the social pressure and the daily humiliations. She left a mark, and that's rather extraordinary. Imagine Séraphine nowadays. She would be stuck with antidepressants, she would sit in front of her TV, and she wouldn't paint.

Martin Provost (Director)

French writer, director, actor Martin Provost was recently nominated for two 2009 César awards (the French equivalent of the Oscars) on behalf of SERAPHINE, including Best Director and Best Writer, the latter of which he won and shared with co-writer Marc Abdelnour. SERAPHINE is the third feature-length film Provost has written and directed.

Filmography

Feature length

2008 Séraphine
2003 Le Ventre de Juliette
1997 Tortilla y Cinema

Short Films

1992 Cocon (Cocoon)
1990 J'ai peur du noir

Novels

2008 Léger, Humain, Pardonnable (Le Seuil) (Light, Human, Forgivable)
1992 Aime-moi vite (Flammarion) (Love Me Quickly)

Yolande Moreau (Séraphine de Senlis)

Belgian-born comedian, actress, writer and director Yolande Moreau garnered three awards for her role as Séraphine Louis since the release of SERAPHINE in France last October, including the 2009 César award for Best Actress, marking the second time she has won the award.

Moreau began her career working in children's theater in Brussels (Théâtre de la Ville de Bruxelles). In 1982, she wrote and performed "A Dirty Business of Sex and Crime," a tragicomic one-woman show that toured all over France, Switzerland and Quebec. Acclaimed French director Agnès Varda noticed her and gave her first screen role in a short and in her feature "Sans Toit Ni Loi". In 1989, Moreau joined renowned French comedy troupe La Compagnie de Jérôme Deschamps and became one of their stars, gaining recognition for various roles, especially on the French satirical hit television show, *Les Deschiens*.

Moreau has since been seen in many critically acclaimed films, including Jean-Paul Rappenaud's *The Horseman On The Roof*, Agnes Varda's *Vagabond*, Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Amélie* and Catherine Breillat's *The Last Mistress*. In 2004, she wrote and directed her first feature, *When The Sea Rises* (co-written and co-directed by Gilles Porte) for which she was nominated for the European Film Award for European Discovery of the Year and won two Césars for Best Actress and Best First Film.

Since SERAPHINE, Moreau has acted in several films including Jean-Pierre Jeunet's upcoming "*Micmacs à Tire-Larigot*", Gustave de Kervern and Benoit Delépine's

Louise-Michel - recently selected for New York's New Directors, New Films series, and *Serge Gainsbourg (Vie Heroique)* in which she plays French Realist singer Frehel.

Selective Filmography

- 2001 *Amélie* by Jean-Pierre Jeunet
- The Milk of Human Kindness* by Dominique Cabrera
- 2002 *A Piece of Sky* by Bénédicte Liénard
- 2003 *Welcome to the Roses* by Francis Palluau
- 2004 *When the Sea Rises* by Yolande Moreau and Gilles Porte
- 2005 César awards for Best First Feature length film and for Best Actress
- 2004 Louis Delluc award for Best First Film
- 2005 *The Axe* by Costa-Gavras
- 2006 *Locked Out* by Albert Dupontel
- Paris, Je t'aime* Sylvain Chomet sequence
- Call Me Elisabeth* by Jean-Pierre Améris
- 2007 *The Last Mistress* by Catherine Breillat
- 2008 *Séraphine* by Martin Provost
- 2008 *A Day at the Museum* by Jean-Michel Ribes
- 2008 *Louise Michel* by Benoît Delépine and Gustave Kervern
- 2008 *De l'Amour sinon rien* by Claude Berne
- 2009 *Micmacs à tire-larigot* by Jean-Pierre Jeunet

Theater Selection

- 1989-1993 *Lapin Chasseur*, directed by J. Deschamps and Macha Makeieff
- 1990-1993 *Les Pieds dans l'eau*, directed by J. Deschamps and Macha Makeieff
- 1993-1994 *Les Brigands*, directed by J. Deschamps and Macha Makeieff
- 1994-1996 *C'est magnifique*, directed by J. Deschamps and Macha Makeieff
- 1996 *Le Défilé*, directed by J. Deschamps and Macha Makeieff
- 1997 *Les Précieuses ridicules*, directed by J. Deschamps and Macha Makeieff
- 1999-2000 *Les Pensionnaires*, directed by J. Deschamps and Macha Makeieff
- 2007 *A Dirty Business of Sex and Crime*, by and with Yolande Moreau

Ulrich Tukur (Wilhelm Uhde)

After studying in Boston and at the Hanover University, Ulrich Tukur continued his studies in English and history at the Tübingen University while working professionally as an accordionist and singer. A student at the Stuttgart School of Music and Performing Arts beginning in 1980, the young man was noticed by Michael Verhoeven who hired him as an actor for *The White Rose* in 1982. He then went on to make several TV movies, while pursuing a parallel career on stage, focusing primarily on the Shakespearean repertoire. Tukur appeared in several German films, including *Die Schaukel* by the future director of *Bagdad Café*, Percy Adlon, and *My Mother's Courage* (1995), which marked his reunion with Michael Verhoeven. Although he performed in Istvan Szabo's *Taking Sides* along with Harvey Keitel, it was Costa-Gavras's scathing *Amen*, an adaptation of Rolf Hochhuth's *Vicar*, which made him famous abroad. The actor worked with the French director once more in *The Ax* and in *Solaris* under the direction of Steven Soderbergh. Tukur co-starred in the Academy Award winner for Best Foreign Language Film, *The Lives of Others*, and recently won the 2009 German Film Award (German Academy Award) for Best Actor for "John Rabe," the story of a German businessman living in China who created a haven for Chinese refugees fleeing Japanese forces during the Nanking massacre in 1937.

Selective Filmography

- 2002 Taking Sides by Istvan Szabo
- 2002 Amen by Costa-Gavras
- 2003 Solaris by Steven Soderbergh
- 2005 The Ax by Costa-Gavras
- 2007 The Lives of Others by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck
- 2008 Séraphine by Martin Provost
- 2009 Où est la main de l'homme sans tête by Stéphane and Guillaume Malandrin
- 2009 Eden Is West by Costa-Gavras
- 2009 John Rabe by Florian Gallenberger
- 2009 A White Ribbon by Michael Haneke
- 2009 Within the Whirlwind by Marleen Goris
- 2009 Der große Kater by Wolfgang Panzer

Laurent Brunet (Cinematographer)

French cinematographer, Laurent Brunet won the 2009 César award for Best Cinematography for *Séraphine*. He is best known for his cinematography on the films of Raphael Nadjari (he shot all five of Nadjari's feature films).

Selective Filmography

- 1999 The Shade by Raphael Nadjari
- 2001 I Am Josh Polonski's Brother by Raphael Nadjari
- 2002 Apartment #5C by Raphael Nadjari
- 2004 Stones by Raphael Nadjari
- 2004 Or (My Treasure) by Keren Yedaya
- 2005 Free Zone by Amos Gitai
- 2007 Tehilim by Raphael Nadjari
- 2008 Séraphine by Martin Provost
- 2008 La Belle Personne by Christophe Honoré

Michael Galasso (Composer)

Born in Hammond, Louisiana, composer, violinist and musical director Michael Galasso was recently honored with a 2009 César award for the original music he composed for *Séraphine*.

Galasso began studying the violin at the age of three and had his solo debut performing Vivaldi's Concerto in A minor with the New Orleans Philharmonic at age 11. He began his career composing music for Robert Wilson's "*Ouverture*" (1972), "*The Life and Times of Joseph Stalin*" (1973), "*A Letter for Queen Victoria*" (1974-5), and "*The \$ Value of Man*" (1975).

Recent films scored by Galasso include Wong Kar-wai's "*Chunking Express*" and "*In the Mood for Love*." He received nominations for the latter by the Chicago Film Critics Association and The Hong Kong Film Awards for his original score.

Galasso has also made numerous sound/music installations, including the *Giorgio Armani Retrospective* at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2000 (the first sound installation in the museum's history) and the Guggenheim Bilbao in 2001. The exhibition traveled to the Neue National Galerie in Berlin in May 2003, followed by London's Royal Academy of Arts in October 2003 and the Terme Diocleziano in Rome in May 2004.

Michael Galasso has written and performed music for choreographers Karole Armitage, Andy DeGroat and Lucinda Childs. His second album for ECM Records, "*High Lines*," was released in March 2005.

About Séraphine Louis

a.k.a Séraphine de Senlis, "with no rival"...

Biographical Notes

1864

Séraphine is born on September 2 in Arsy-sur-Oise. Her father is a small time clock maker and her mother is a farm girl. As a child, Séraphine spends her time between school (she is said to be a good student) and the fields (she is a shepherdess).

1877

When she turns 13, Séraphine is sent to work as a maid in Paris. She will later be hired by an institute for young women where she will initiate herself to art by observing the drawing teacher's classes.

1882

At 18, Séraphine is hired as a servant by the nuns of the Saint-Joseph-de-Cluny convent where she will stay for 20 years.

1902

Séraphine begins working as a maid.

1905

It was her guardian angel, according to her, who suggested to Séraphine that she draw and later, that she paint. Very pious, Séraphine is familiar with these kinds of visions and "voices" that will accompany her until the end of her life.

1912

Séraphine meets the German collector Wilhelm Uhde, who rents a two-bedroom apartment in Senlis where she does one hour of cleaning every morning. Invited by a local petit bourgeois family, Uhde is seduced by a still life of apples. When he learns that it is one of Séraphine's pieces, he strongly encourages her to continue painting.

1914

The First World War begins. W. Uhde leaves for Germany after his belongings were seized.

1927

W. Uhde has returned to France and settled in Chantilly. While visiting an exhibition of works by local painters in the Senlis city hall, he "rediscovers" Séraphine and decides to support her career. To help Séraphine's work, Uhde has large canvases and paint delivered to her on a regular basis and supports her financially. It is the beginning of fame, of the first newspaper articles and the first sales...

1929

In Paris, Uhde organizes the exhibition "The Painters of the Sacré-Coeur." Some of Séraphine's paintings hang alongside works by Le Douanier Rousseau. Many of her works enter private collections, art lovers visit her in Senlis, people talk about her...It's an era of relative opulence during which Séraphine gives free reign to her "unpredictable" temperament, spending without counting...

1930

The economic crisis complicates W. Uhde's already precarious financial situation even further. These material factors, which completely elude Séraphine, throw her into a state of anxiety and incomprehension.

1931

Yesterday's "extravagances" have taken on such proportions that they are indicative of a real altered mental state. Séraphine speaks to herself, harangues passersby, announcing the end of the world, rambling, howling that she is persecuted.

1932

On January 31, Séraphine creates an uproar in Senlis. The gendarmes drive her to the town hospital where the doctors deliver a diagnosis that cannot be appealed: "delirious and systematic ideas of persecution, psycho-sensorial hallucinations, deep emotional confusion..."

On February 25, Séraphine is committed to the Clermont-de-l'Oise psychiatric hospital. She will refuse to paint from then on. That same year, her paintings are exhibited in Paris in the show "The Modern Primitives."

1934

In his book "Five Primitive Masters" (1949), W. Uhde dates Séraphine's death to the year 1934, a confounding piece of information.

1937 and 1938

The exhibition "The Popular Masters of Reality" opens in Paris, and then travels to Zurich and finally to MoMA in New York City.

1942

The exhibition "Twentieth Century Primitives" opens in Paris. Séraphine dies on December 18 in the Clermont-de-l'Oise psychiatric hospital. She was 78 years old. She is buried in a communal grave.

1945

W. Uhde organizes the first exhibition entirely devoted to Séraphine at the Galerie de France in Paris.

The Clermont Hospital's Homage to Séraphine

In 2007, as each year since 1999, the municipality honored the memory of the 3,500 mental patients who died of hunger and exhaustion during the war at the Clermont-de-l'Oise hospital.

To mark the occasion, the cultural organization "Amis du Centre Hospitalier Intedépartemental de Clermont-de-l'Oise," which was keen on giving an homage to Séraphine, decided to display a plaque on the communal grave where she rests. On it is written, in accordance with a wish Séraphine had expressed in a letter: "Here rests Séraphine Louis Maillard (with no rival) 02-09-1864 – 18-12-1942, awaiting the blessed resurrection."

About collector Wilhelm Uhde 1874-1947

The "discoverer" of Rousseau...and of Séraphine
Head of the German community in Paris.
Friend of Braque and of Picasso
Great art collector and art historian...

More of a collector than a dealer, Wilhelm Uhde is inseparable from the Parisian avant-gardes of the 1900s, and is especially well known for those towards whom he spent a great amount of his energy and of his fortune: the naïfs, which he preferred referring to as the "modern primitives," and whom he also called the "painters of the sacred Heart," during the first exhibition he organized of their work in Paris in 1929.

Born in a Prussian bourgeois family, W. Uhde first studied law before a trip to Florence dramatically altered the course of his existence. Having settled in Paris in 1903 to live closer to art in the making, Uhde quickly imposes himself as the head of the German community, a central figure of the Dôme café where it gathers.

During his artistic quests, he quickly notices the potential and the extremely novel nature of Le Douanier Rousseau's paintings. One of the very first to have acquired works by the artist, he will also be the first to devote a book to him, in 1911: "Henri Rousseau, le douanier." A friend of Braque, of Robert Delaunay (whose wife, Sonia, was once his ephemeral spouse...), a close friend of Picasso (who painted his portrait in 1907), he is someone who matters. He is the one who advised the young Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, a fellow countryman, to visit the Spanish painter's studio (at the "Bateau-lavoir"), thus sealing the destiny of one of the 20th Century's greatest art dealers.

With the advent of the First World War, Uhde is forced to return to Germany, stripped of his collection, which was seized and later dispersed by the French State. He will not return to France until the mid twenties. And it is in 1927, in Chantilly, that he will once again meet the woman who was his cleaning lady before the war and whose talents he had encouraged: Séraphine Louis, a.k.a de Senlis, for whom he will now devote a lot of energy and money.

In addition to Séraphine, he supports many other of these "modern primitives" whose names are Louis Vivin, Camille Bombois, André Bauchant. He is fascinated by these artists for whom, in his own words "the object of their representation is not the appearance of things, but that superior reality which expresses the cosmic state of things..." Stripped of his German citizenship in 1938, his possessions are once again confiscated by France (as is his friend Kahnweiler's collection). Uhde spends the war

in hiding, in the southwest of France. He died in Paris in 1947, having had the time to make the dream of his "discovery" come true: organizing a solo show of Séraphine in 1945 at the Galerie de France.

An essay by Bertrand Lorquin, Curator of the Musée Maillol where the Seraphine retrospective was held

"It was common during the Renaissance to designate an artist by the name of the city or of the village from which he came from originally. Hence we are familiar with Antonello da Messina, Leonardo da Vinci as if they were proper names. Séraphine joined this tradition on the eve of the 20th Century by becoming Séraphine de Senlis or just Séraphine. A humble cleaning lady, she is devoured by the urge to paint, that famous inner need Kandinsky spoke about with regards to artists who are overcome by a true desire to create. And yet it is in the city of Senlis, still seeped in a gothic atmosphere, that the German aesthete and collector Wilhelm Uhde discovers the talent and the personality of the woman who is his cleaning lady. Uhde is astonished by the power, the scale, and above all the intensity conveyed by the floral compositions Séraphine paints. If she joins the family of primitive painters by virtue of being designated as such, her paintings also enter the strange world of primitivism. Uhde sees in these works the expression of modern primitivism, in other words, the power of representing the world of the unconscious liberated from any school, from any form of academicism, and from any connection. Séraphine is self-taught, she makes her paints herself and she keeps the secret of their making. Divided between the art of pathology and the dazzling of her spirit, Séraphine is inhabited by visions which she sometimes discovers by looking at the illuminated rosette of the Senlis cathedral. Not unlike the Middle Age populations that would fall in adoration in front of the clarity of images and colors, Séraphine reproduces in her paintings the fire that has enflamed the psyche of entire generations. This was one of the dimensions of her art that fascinated Wilhelm Uhde's gaze. He had seen in the paintings of Le Douanier Rousseau, whose talent he was the first to understand, the same expressive power he would find in Séraphine. Uhde organized exhibitions for her and made her enter the history of modern painting. Without him, her paintings would have remained forgotten, hung in some clerical offices. Let us not forget that Georges de La Tour's importance was only discovered in the thirties, and that we had to wait until the end of the 19th Century to isolate Vermeer from the other great Dutch masters! The movie that recounts the events of Séraphine's tragic, but oh how moving life, presents the too rare opportunity of exhuming a great artist from oblivion. The Musée Maillol, which owns an important collection assembled by Dina Vierny of works by five modern primitives, and most notably several of Séraphine's masterpieces, entirely associates itself with this event."

About Naïve Primitive Art

Naïve Art, a style of art, predominantly painting, that is produced by non-professional artists who are generally self-taught and who paint in a direct, somewhat simplified style, usually using bright colors. Because naïve painters lack formal training, certain representational skills are absent from their work. For example, perspective, where it is employed, is non-scientific and often inconsistent; the principles of anatomy are absent from depictions of humans and animals; such features as figures, trees, and buildings, rather than being modeled in depth, generally appear flattened and two-dimensional; and colors are often bright and non-naturalistic.

Naïve art often has a dreamlike charm and luminosity. The vision of the naïve artist is typically spontaneous and genuine, with a marked directness of expression. The themes of naïve art are characteristically those of daily life, in towns or in the countryside; they may depict everyday activities, local celebrations and festivals, work in the country, or townscapes. Naïve art is often, but by no means always, unsigned and this reflects the self-image of the naïve painter as a craftsman rather than as an artist. Naïve art shares much in common with folk art, and the distinction between them is often difficult to draw. Indeed, the origins of naïve art lie in the traditions of folk art and the existence of such vernacular traditions as quilt-making, signwriting, and toymaking, and the itinerant portrait painter. It was in the 19th century, when the role of the folk artist was gradually obliterated by the increasing availability of industrially made products, that naïve art emerged as a separate art form, most notably in Europe and in North America, although traditions of naïve art exist all over the world.

The best-known European naïve artist is the French painter Henri Julien Félix Rousseau, known as Le Douanier Rousseau. His work bears all the characteristics of the untrained, naïve artists in its inconsistent treatment of pictorial space, absence of illusionistic lighting, and adoption of strong color. His subjects include portraits and, more famously, tropical scenes peopled with animals and human figures; lush colors imbue his painting with mystery and fantasy. Rousseau painted in his free time for almost a decade before exhibiting for the first time at the Société des Artistes Indépendants in 1886. Throughout his career, Rousseau sought recognition by the official art world but continually suffered rejection by the selecting jury of its annual exhibiting forum, the Salon. During the 1890s, criticism of Rousseau's exhibited work grew. One critic commented that "the public doubled up with laughter" when they saw his *Tiger in a Tropical Storm* (1891, National Gallery, London).

It was largely due to Wilhelm Uhde, the Parisian critic and collector, that Rousseau's work, and later naïve painting itself, was recognized as a style in its own right. Uhde also supported the work of four other French naïve painters: Louis Vivin, André Bauchant, Camille Bombois, and Séraphine Louis. All began to paint relatively late in their lives: Vivin, for example, had been a post-office worker and did not begin to paint regularly until after he retired; Bombois was a porter, navvy, and docker until, in his late 40s, his success allowed him to devote all his time to painting. Séraphine Louis worked as a domestic servant, in her spare time painting plants and flowers in rich, non-naturalistic colors.

Another well-known school of peasant naïve painting is that centering around Hlebine, in Croatia. It was discovered and promoted by Krsto Hegedusic, who organized exhibitions of the group's work. The best known of the Hlebine naïve artists is Ivan Generalić, whose subject matter is the countryside in which he lived. Another noteworthy Croatian naïve painter is Emerik Feješ, who painted a series of views that he copied from postcards, transforming the photographic image into a brightly colored and meticulously constructed representation.

The most celebrated naïve painter in the United States was Grandma Moses (whose real name was Anna Maria Robertson). She received no school education and began working as a farmhand at the age of 12. Painting was a hobby to which she turned intermittently, primarily as a means to decorate her home, but after the death of her husband in 1926 she took it up more seriously in order to keep herself busy. Her work is characterized by harmonious compositions depicting in a romantic light the

scenes and activities that filled her childhood in rural America; among them are *Harvest Time* (1945), *Mount Nebo in Winter* (1943), and *Taking in the Laundry* (1951).

In Britain, the most important naïve artist of the 20th century was Alfred Wallis, a Cornish seaman native to St Ives, who turned to painting only in his 70s. He painted with boatman's paint directly on to old, irregularly shaped pieces of card or board, and sometimes on to the backs of old envelopes. He would usually take the shape of the card into account and adjust his composition accordingly. Like other naïve painters, Wallis painted his own world—St Ives, boats, and the sea—but he also used his imagination without restraint. His paintings have a childlike quality because they incorporate not only what he saw but also what he knew; distances between buildings and places are altered, multiple viewpoints are adopted, and the sea is frequently included even where it could not be seen because it was nearby; its roar can be heard as a constant reminder of its presence and because it was so central to the artist's life.

Just as, in France, the work of naïve artists was admired by artists of the avant-garde, so, in Britain, the work of Alfred Wallis played a central role in the emergence of Modernism in British painting. He was discovered accidentally by the artists Ben Nicholson and Christopher Wood during a day trip to St Ives in August 1928. The naïvety of Wallis's style and his whole approach to his art were exactly the qualities they were seeking in their own work. Certain elements of naïve painting also appealed to Modernist artists working in the early decades of the 20th century; traces of the style can be seen in the work of Kandinsky, Malevich, Klee, and Léger.

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