

Micheline LO's Biography



LO by Pierre RADISIC

Micheline LOTTEFIER - known under the artist name Micheline LO - was born on June 11, 1930 in Paris, in the former rue Bourgeois, now located on the site of the Montparnasse train station. She spent her early years in France before moving to Belgium. Between 1934 and 2003, Micheline lived successively in Brussels, Tournai, Mons, then again in Brussels until the age of 72, in 2003.

Painter and philosopher, her work reflects her deep knowledge of philosophy, literature and the arts, three subjects that she taught. Her artistic career offers a unique approach to painting. She has exhibited in some twenty galleries around the world, from Brussels to Montreal, Paris and Rome. Overall, she produced more than 700 works, in 30 distinct series. Henri VAN LIER, her lifelong companion, described her as a "painter of living formations". Working in line with the scientific concepts of her time, Micheline LO was, as such, a true cosmogonic painter.

During her philology studies at the Catholic University of Louvain, Micheline LO met and then married, at the age of 20, on November 18, 1950, Henri VAN LIER, a Belgian philosopher, former Jesuit and future anthropogenist. The couple settled in Brussels and had five children: Anne (1951), Marc (1953), Jean (who died shortly after birth), Luc (1956) and Dominique (1958). Micheline resumed her studies after her pregnancies and obtained a degree

in philosophy in 1962. She then became a professor of philosophy, aesthetics and art history in Brussels.

Micheline LO devoted her end-of-studies dissertation to modern dance, particularly the ballets of Maurice BEJART, in which each dancer stands out individually, unlike the overall coordination of classical dance. She often shares with her children her enthusiasm for BEJART's works, such as *Le Sacre du printemps*.

Teacher of rhetoric at the Institut Sainte-Ursule in Brussels for two years, Micheline moved on to teach aesthetics and plastic arts at the "Le 75" Higher School of Arts in Woluwe-Saint-Lambert and at the School of Graphic Research (ERG) in Brussels. Her husband, Henri VAN LIER, writes about her: "Every year, her teaching led her to revisit the forms of contemporary art and our seven planetary civilizations: Japan, China, India, Islam, Black Africa, Europe, and Latin America. And she did so by following the existential paths of artists and cultures".

Micheline LO worked closely with her husband, Henri VAN LIER, throughout her life, from the age of 20. She played a decisive role in the production of the 4000 pages collected on the anthropogenie.com website, and produced over half a century by her spouse. She rereads, corrects and animates every line of text, with precision and absolute exactitude. It gives her the opportunity to explore, in depth, various fields such as the spatial arts, the French literature and the logic of ten European languages.

Henri VAN LIER, a well-known Belgian philosopher, has published several influential works, including *Philosophy of Photography*. He considered Micheline LO to be the co-author of several of his works, including:

- *Les Arts de l'espace" (1959)*
- *Twelve articles in Encyclopaedia Universalis (1968-1972)*
- *"Philosophy of photography" (1983)*

Around 1965, at the age of 35, between Belgium and Provence, Micheline LO wrote *Flexte*, a literary work. This unpublished work, of which numerous extracts still appear in her monograph, is described by Henri VAN LIER as a form of automatic writing more radical than that of the Surrealists, due to its "neuronic leaps".

Micheline LO also created a richly illustrated children's book about the adventures of legendary Brussels characters. Although the book was not published, the publisher encouraged Micheline to continue drawing and coloring. And one day, suddenly, at the age of 52, after having assimilated a multitude of artistic subjects, Micheline began to paint, all at once, in an almost perfect manner.

Micheline is also an accomplished pianist. She enjoys and plays four-hand scores. Henri VAN LIER describes her as a talented musician, who can play classical music at sight, particularly

the works of SCARLATTI. Her piano improvisations are comparable to the neuronic experimentation of her work "Flexte".

She rarely listens to recordings while painting. When she does, she listens to sequential music in the background, such as African songs or Lightning Country. She has a preference for listening to music on a loop.

Micheline admires Tina Turner's versatility and uniqueness. With this singer, every sound, expression and style remains distinctive. Just like Tina, who is interested in Buddhism, Micheline is interested in yoga. She admires Tina's ability to switch instantly from her life as an artist to her private life. Micheline shares this ability when one of her eight grandchildren crosses the threshold of her atelier.

Her travels, although few in number, are intense: India, Mexico, California, New York, North Africa and the European peninsulas, which she approaches not as a tourist, but as a resident, with a morphogenetic perspective. She enjoys observing how customs derive from local geologies.

Micheline LO's workshops

Micheline LO occupied several workshops during her career as a painter. Her first workshop, located on rue Antoine BREART, near the park of Saint-Gilles, on the corner of the chaussée d'Alseberg in Brussels, was spacious enough to accommodate large works, such as *The Osborne Bull* measuring 2 meters by 4.

Subsequently, she worked at 48 avenue Ducpétiaux. This workshop consisted of three adjoining rooms connected by large doors. The ceilings were approximately 3.5 meters high, and large windows were located at the north and south ends of the room. She stored her paintings in the north room, on the rue Ducpétiaux side, and painted in the central room, on the east wall.

To fix her canvases, Micheline uses pins or paints directly on the floor on cardboard. The light coming in from her right is ideal for a left-handed person. She prepares her colors in the south room, on the garden side, where she has maximum light.

After moving to 158 Rue Antoine Bréart, the workshop, smaller but still with a high ceiling, was set up in the south room, on the garden side. The central room served as bedroom and dining room. It is surprising to see how, in this small space, Micheline LO was able to paint the large formats (200 x 230 cm) of the series "Les Chemins des écritures".

Her artist's approach

In 1982, without any prior technical education, Micheline LO began to paint. She first produced copies and variations of works by Van Eyck, Rubens and Velázquez. Then she undertook to visually express the perceptions of great writers.

Right from the start, she departs from any composition, image or illustration. She is interested in pictorial elements, their connections, their formations, their metamorphoses. She does not seek to create integrated harmonious assemblages, finished forms, plastic structures that suggest totalities. Her approach is different. She focuses on the autonomy of pictorial elements and their participation in processes of formation.

After ten years of painting, she summarized her approach by saying

“I paint the cerebral landscape”.

The results of this artistic approach are astonishing. Each perceived element stands out from the others, giving the impression of detaching itself and floating on the canvas, in a kind of three-dimensional space-time. The colors, bright and multiple, do not combine with each other, but assert themselves through their singularities, their differences and their gaps.

Micheline LO will add: “I have no imagination”, “I only pick up indices”. A way of saying that she paints perceptions, not intentions.

In her pictorial approach, Micheline explores the perceived elements without arranging them on the fixed plane of the canvas. Each element can be perceived as moving forward or backward, as approaching or receding, in a kind of three-dimensional movement. The blacks can be seen as sinking behind the canvas or emerging in front of it. The same goes for the other colors.

« It all has to move forward and backward at the same time »

Micheline LO repeated.

Then, the spectator's gaze - bouncing from element to element and being unable to focus on anything - enters not into a process of contemplation “in front of” something, but into a process of participation “with”, “in”, “among” something.

Micheline LO's paintings don't tell anything, they show, they are there “to be looked at”, to be lived.

A dark room is not suitable for Micheline LO's paintings. Ideally, the light should be natural, intense, uniform and soft. Each color exists for and by itself. Each pencil stroke seems to come from a different spool of thread. Micheline works in Brussels and in the Drôme, where

she spends several months a year, but it is the light of Brussels that suits her best. It is intense, uniform (gray sky, low) and fairly horizontal.

Micheline LO worked on her creative process for a long time by pinning her works to the wall or arranging them on a trestle table. Once finished, she would mount them herself on a frame, a choice that sometimes hides her signature on the edge of the painting.

She prefers acrylic, a substance that allows for vivid and quick painting. The disappearance in the mid-1990s of her favorite brand of paint, Grumbacher, which she bought at Schleiper in Belgium, represented a technical challenge for her.

The edges and corners of her paintings are neither frames nor boundaries. They are more like "ebb zones". An observer did so point out that "what happens at the edges of the canvas" is as important as what happens in the middle of the canvas.

Later, Micheline LO would paint canvases already mounted on a frame. She will cover then the entire surface, including the outer edges of the paintings.

During her lifetime, she exhibited her works in various galleries, group exhibitions and artistic events. For example :

- 2000, *Le bestiaire* (Bestiary), Jacques Franck Cultural Center, Brussels
- 1998, *Les chemins des écritures* (Pathways of Writings), Studio Opera d'Arte Gallery, Rome
- 1996, *Vents* (Winds), Université Populaire de la Drôme Provençale, Nyons, France
- 1994, *Cien Años de Soledad*, Casa de America Latina, Brussels
- 1994, From Bellini to Salammbô, ArtChisud Gallery, Brussels
- 1992, Micheline LO Retrospective: Ten Years of Painting, Saint-Gilles Town Hall
- 1992, *Enfer* by Jean Genet, Herold Gallery, Brussels
- 1992, *La Vache Bleue* (2) (Blue Cow 1), Galerie du Pont-Neuf, Malmédy
- 1990, *Le Paradis de Dante* (Paradiso), series 4 and 5, Galerie Esthète, Brussels
- 1989, *La Vache Bleue* (1) (, Gallery Alexandra Monett, Brussels
- 1989, *Le Paradis de Dante* (Paradiso), series 2, Ex Chiesa di San Nicolo, Cingoli (Ancona), Italy
- 1989, *Quelques Tombeaux* (Tombs), Jean-Louis Laroche, Montreal, Canada
- 1988, *Les Tombeaux* (Tombs) and *Terra Nostra*, Gallery Alexandra Monett, Brussels
- 1986, *Le Paradis de Dante* (Paradiso), series 1, 2 and 3, Gallery Alexandra Monett, Brussels
- 1985, *Suite de la Nativité* (Nativity suite), Centre des Riches Claires, Brussels
- 1985, *Suite Espagnole* (Spanish suite), Gallery Alexandra Monett, Brussels
- 1984, *La Tentation de saint Antoine* (The Temptation), Gallery Alexandra Monett, Brussels

The cerebral landscape in LO

A brain only processes gaps (écarts) and connections. Gaps weight things up. Connections conduct. The first layers of the brain are where perception is located. The last layers are where imagination and intention are located. A brain has no edge. It is never reduced to two dimensions. Alive, it is always in turmoil, in formation, in generation.

Therefore, painting the cerebral landscape means working on gaps, differences, connections and perceptions in three dimensions, without edges or finished forms.

The first series by Micheline LO (1982–1995)

Micheline LO's first series explore the cerebral landscape of third parties: artists, peoples, remarkable events. Let's listen to what she writes about FLAUBERT:

I prefer to paint [the desert] through the eyes of Flaubert, who borrows the eyes of Saint Anthony, who borrows the eyes of delirium, which completely distorts the unity of the desert, since he sees only mirages.

So if a landscape excites me, it is the cerebral landscape.

From the outset, she thus situates her work outside of any image, representation, restitution, composition or illustration. In the case of FLAUBERT, it is a question of intertwined perceptions, which inspire her and trigger a pictorial process. More generally, she will say the following about her first paintings:

I seek to produce an effect of going beyond the normal [...] a sense of astonishment linked to sensory disarray [...]. Simply disconcerting.

The series *Les chemins des écritures* (The Pathways of Writings)(1996 – 1997)

In 1996, after 14 years of painting, during which she drew inspiration from third-party cerebral landscapes, Micheline LO embarked on a series called *Les chemins des écritures* (The Paths of Writing), which consists of 53 canvases.

This time, she frees herself from any identified third parties. She paints what could be called « universalized cerebral landscapes ». For Henri VAN LIER, she goes even so far as to paint "living formations". The paintings in this series represent tangles of elementary signs (symbols, numbers, letters, diagrams) as the brain perceives them from its first layers, even before entering into a process of interpretation, narration, imagination or intention. In this

series, there are no places but paths. No things but signs. Not to mention that it is about ambiguous signs insofar as they are both “full”, turned towards themselves, and “empty”, turned towards other signs or other things.

Her later series (1998–2001)

Then, in late 1997, Micheline continued her work as a painter of cerebral landscapes, drawing her inspiration from essential components and phenomena of the Universe, particularly in her series *Astronomer, Small Gardens, Bestiary, Chameleons, Migrations*.

Artistic movement of LO

LO is hard to categorize within an established artistic movement. Classical painters compose and organize SHAPES. Impressionists decompose and recompose LIGHT. Modern painters break up, flatten, distort, recompose, reinvent, glue, assemble and glide realistic, abstract, surrealist, hyperrealist, invented SHAPES, etc. Contemporary painters often work with imprints and photographic codes.

Micheline LO, for her part, explores INDICES, GAPS and FORMATIONS. A natural or cerebral landscape is made up of indices, gaps and formations. A biological or artificial brain only processes and weights up gaps and formations.

Whereas classical, impressionist and modern paintings essentially brought into play forms, compositions and light, in LO's work the plastic cells are replaced by perceived elements, the forms are replaced by formations, contemplation “in front of” is replaced by the effervescence “among”, analogizing generalities are replaced by digitalizing singularities, and the connections between elements are replaced by relays of triggers.

The notion of cerebral landscape covers an original field of research, distinct from the composition, decomposition and recombination of classical and modern paintings. It also covers a field of research that is far removed from photographic codes, with their fixed grains and motionless planes.

APPENDIX 1

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CEREBRAL LANDSCAPE

The cerebral landscape, as painted by Micheline LO, has several characteristics. Here are a few:

No edges: A natural landscape evolves with the gaze, the movements of the body and the head of the spectator. It has no edges. The cerebral landscape has no edges either. It is in perpetual formation. In Micheline LO's work, the frame of the painting is not a stopping line, but a line of ebb.

Flows: In a brain, everything is flow. It all flows. In Micheline LO's paintings, everything is flowing. “ Like a sea upright on a wall” she said. The gaze cannot rest on anything. It circulates among the elements of the canvas, as it would in a landscape.

Gaps (écarts): Synapses manage weights, gaps. Micheline LO painted thematic gaps, but also and above all pictorial ones. Gaps of colors, of lights, of lines, of spots, of imprints, etc.

Living formations: In a brain, nothing is ever finished. Everything is always in formation. Micheline LO did not paint « finished forms ». Henri VAN LIER said, « she paints living formations ».

No plane surfaces: A brain is not a collection of mental maps laid out on flat surfaces, like in a photobook. Micheline LO did not paint flat surfaces. In her paintings and drawings, most of the elements seem to be “suspended”, detached from the canvas.

No image: A natural or cerebral landscape is not an image, nor is it a collection of images. It is never fixed. In Micheline LO's paintings, nothing is “the image of” or “in the image of”. Everything there is and remains in formation. Her paintings and drawings do not propose forms, structures or images, but rather perceived elements.

Plurality: A brain is plural. It is structured by territory. It contains multitudes of unconscious elements, variously connected. Micheline LO's painting is also plural, organized by series. She said she painted each series until she had exhausted it.

Ungraspability: In a brain, nothing is stable or fixed. There is no portrait, no image, no landscape fixed, motionless on a wall or on a plane. There are only perceived elements that float and assemble from moment to moment at the rhythm of consciousness and neuronal work.

Indiciality: A natural landscape is made up of indices, traces of past or ongoing processes. The same is true of the first layers of the brain, which only perceive indices. When Micheline LO said “I only see indicia” or “I have no imagination”, she was telling us, in her own way, that her work is devoid of intentionality. What interests her in the cerebral landscape of others, as in her own, is not their textures, as in primitive art, nor their structures, as in classical

art, but rather their “ongoing formations”, as in the biological growths of life: vegetable, animal, cerebral, cellular.

No photographic codes: Unlike photographs, which only memorize motionless grains, the brain continuously weights links. The activity of these links accounts for three types of gaps (écarts): of contrasts, of colors, and of movements. From there, the brain reconstructs shapes, colored, fixed or in motion. This is how cerebral landscapes come into being, the first layers of which are the subject of Micheline LO's pictorial work.

In, Among: One can be “facing” a photograph, or “facing” a classical painting. But one is “In” or “Among” a landscape, be it natural or cerebral. Micheline LO did not seek to depict, capture, freeze, image or illustrate a concept, an idea, a feeling, a memory, an event or a journey 'on' a canvas, but to bring out a cerebral landscape 'from', 'in', 'among', 'out of' the weave of the canvas. Contemplation “in front of” is replaced here by the effervescence “among”.

APPENDIX 2 ADDITIONAL SOURCES

In English :

Her pictorial work: https://michelinelo.com/documents/textes/LO_her_work.pdf

Monograph (en): https://anthropogenie.com/anthropogeny/lo_en.htm

In French

Site actuel (2025) : https://www.michelinelo.com/series/lo_series_peintures.html

Site original (2000) : <https://www.michelinelo.com/michinelo/index.html>

Notion de paysage cérébral chez Micheline LO

https://www.michelinelo.com/documents/textes/mvl_notion_paysage_LO.pdf

Son œuvre : https://www.michelinelo.com/texte_serie/oeuvre_texte.html

Articles divers : https://www.michelinelo.com/documents/documents_liste.html

Catalogues d'expositions : https://www.michelinelo.com/expositions/expositions_liste.html

Art moderne et photographie :

https://anthropogenie.com/articles/Photographie_Denis_BAUDIER_Art_moderne_et_Photographie_2022.pdf