

## Gabriel Dauchot – the Merchant of the Marvellous

I've been meaning to write a little homage to Gabriel Dauchot for a while. He is an artist whose work I appreciate immensely, and I've noticed that many of you do, too. This makes me optimistic about life—and my, don't we need reasons to be! To me, it is proof that we art lovers and collectors have a sharp radar for authenticity. We recognize and value it when an artist opens his heart with such vulnerability; that, truly, is what Dauchot's art is all about.

I'll start with one of my favorite paintings as a case in point: meet the barefooted girl. An early work from circa 1948, it feels incredibly fresh. When I look at it, I can almost feel the damp grass beneath her feet. While she is no particular beauty—Dauchot is an Expressionist, after all—you can feel her essence. She is happy, self-contained, and simply present. She is depicted with such tenderness that I cannot help but think she was a real person, someone who mattered deeply to the artist

Gabriel Dauchot:  
*The Barefooted Girl, ca 1948*  
oil on hardboard, signed lower centre,  
11 x 37 cm  
Provenance: with Galerie Cardo  
£ 640/EUR 730/USD 845



Gabriel Dauchot was born in 1927 in the Paris suburb of Livry-Gargan. His artistic talent manifested itself early. Encouraged by his father, an architect, he started painting at the age of 14, studying with Emile Othon Friez and Yves Brayer at the Academy de la Grande Chaumière, and being admitted to the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in 1942, when he was just 16 years old.

He participated in the Parisian Salons from a young age and was not yet twenty when the Katia Granoff gallery, and then the Cardo gallery, organized his first solo exhibitions. Our barefooted girl was acquired from the Cardo gallery and bears the Cardo gallery label on the verso.

"The winner is under thirty" wrote art historian and critic Claude Roger-Marx when in 1951 the prize of the Society of Collectors and Amateurs of Art was awarded to Gabriel Dauchot. He notes the artist's palette, where *"the muted exuberance which he gives to the opaque backgrounds where cold greys, greens, carmines and saffrons sing with distinction."*

This muted exuberance Roger-Marx describes is on full display in our next painting.

Look at this man with his prominent, knobbly nose leaning against the old-fashioned Parisian réverbère lamp post.

He is formally dressed but clearly a bit of a shambles, slouching, forlorn.

I cannot help but speculate if this is a self-representation - a glimpse into Dauchot's own sense of outsiderdom.

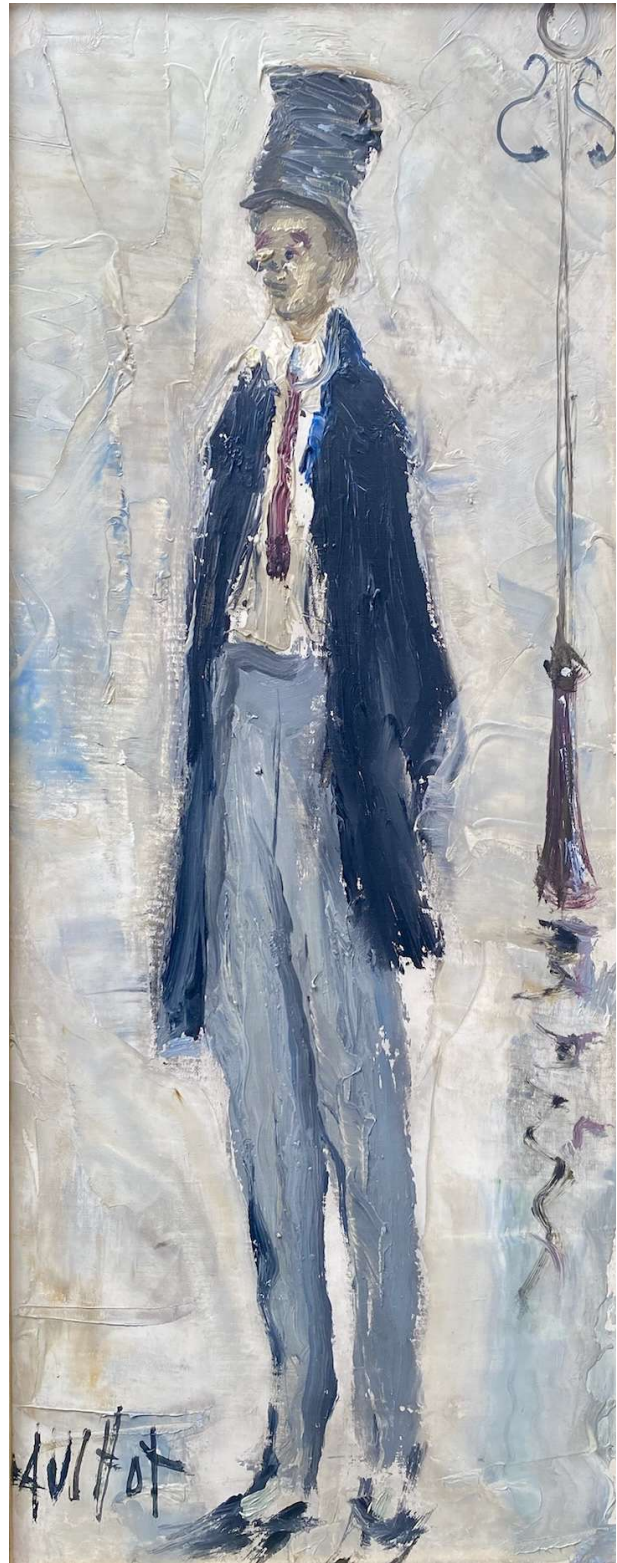
Dauchot was, after all, the quintessential artist: unworldly, bohemian, romantic, frequently drunk. While photographs of

the elusive Dauchot are rare, we know from his body of work that he was his own most frequent subject. This reinforces the idea that for Dauchot, art was a mirror, a fragment of his own soul.

Gabriel Daucot

*The Top Hat/Figure by a Réverbère*  
oil on canvas, signed lower left  
47 x 19 cm

Provenance: private collection, Paris  
£ 580 / EUR 665 / USD 770



The artist Yvon Taillandier aptly called Dauchot “the painter of nostalgia,” speculating that he would have preferred to live between 1850 and 1900. There is a persistent, sweet melancholy in Dauchot’s work—a sense that many of his paintings depict a life he would have loved to inhabit.

Well, who wouldn’t wish to be in the place of these two “Lovers by the Lake,” enjoying a summer picnic with wine and baguette that feels as though it belongs to a slower, more elegant time?

While the scene is idyllic, that “Dauchot touch” remains: the figures appear slightly fragile, isolated in their own private world. It is a dream of intimacy—the kind of quiet, untroubled moment that Dauchot himself, in his bohemian wandering, perhaps spent his life searching for.

Dauchot expresses this nostalgia through his choice of subjects, but also through his technique. To quote Taillandier again, Dauchot “never uses pure colors. His style evokes Soutine through the importance of textural effects, and Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec through composition.”

Gabriel Dauchot  
*The Lovers*,  
oil on canvas, signed lower left,  
47 x 19 cm  
Provenance: with Carel Gallery,  
Miami Beach  
£ 760 / EUR 870 / USD 1000



Dauchot was a Parisian at heart, a fact noted by one of his most prominent admirers, President Jacques Chirac. In his address at the 1982 Gabriel Dauchot Retrospective, Chirac remarked:

*"He is today one of the greatest artists in Paris, in the tradition of a Utrillo, a Marquet, or a Dufy. He invites us on a nostalgic stroll through a timeless Paris—a Paris of small trades, mechanics and shop girls, garrets and bistros—this cheeky Paris that amuses and moves him, and that he gives back to us in his own way."*

Dauchot's world is one where anonymous, melancholic, and dreamy figures—weary waiters, quiet couples, elegant ladies, street musicians—mingle naturally with characters straight out of the *commedia dell'arte*. We see this "cheeky" yet moving Paris perfectly captured in Dauchot's "Quais Imaginaires" (his original title).

In this large work, the Pierrot and Harlequin aren't just performers; they are spirits that animate our existence. By titling the piece "Imaginary Quays," Dauchot gives us permission to step out of geography and into emotion. The river is not just the Seine; it is a stage where the everyday and the theatrical collide, creating a sense of a city that is both grand and deeply intimate.



Gabriel Dauchot *Les Quais Imaginaires* oil on canvas signed lower left, 40 x 80 cm ,  
Provenance: private collection, Paris, £ 1200/ EUR 1375/USD 1580

Harlequins, in particular, were close to Dauchot's heart and remained one of his most enduring subjects. He wasn't alone in his fascination; Greta Garbo, the ultimate icon of enigmatic beauty, owned a Dauchot Harlequin. It's fitting, isn't it? Both understood the power of the mask.

Here is a little gem that captures that spirit perfectly. In this small, intimate work, the Harlequin isn't performing for a crowd; he is caught in a moment of quiet reflection. Note how Dauchot uses his signature "textural effects" here—the costume's diamond pattern is suggested through thick, confident strokes rather than rigid lines, giving the figure a softened, almost weary elegance.

Even though he wears the traditional motley of a comedian, there is no punchline here. Instead, we see that "sweet melancholy" once again. Like all of Dauchot's characters, he is a reminder that behind every colorful exterior lies a story of vulnerability.



Gabriel Dauchot *Harlequin*, oil on canvas signed upper right, 22 x 12 cm Provenance: private collection, Paris £ 520/EUR 595/ USD 690

While Dauchot often focused on solitary figures, he was also a master of minimalism. In this work, he captures the entire atmosphere of a day at the races with remarkably sparse means. Look at the foreground: at first glance, the figures are mere silhouettes, but as you look closer, they resolve into very distinct people with clear posture and detail—a gentleman in a top hat and a lady in a fine hat and cape. Behind the track, a few hurried black strokes are all he needs to denote the presence of a distant audience. It is a marvelous example of how Dauchot could summon up all the excitement and tension of the turf without ever over-complicating the board.

Dauchot's settings vary, the common denominator in almost all of his paintings is the sky. His skies are never mere backgrounds; they take up vast space, filled with clouds that seem to pulse with their own energy and ambience. Whether it is a quiet lakeside or the tension of the racecourse, it is the sky that sets the emotional temperature of the piece. Art critic and collector René Domergue aptly called Gabriel Dauchot a "merchant of the marvelous". The secret to his marvelousness is that he doesn't ask for your affection instantly. Someone once told me that you don't fall in love with a Dauchot in two seconds; you grow into it over twenty. It takes those extra seconds for the silhouettes to resolve into people, and for his palette to truly begin to sing. But once you've entered his world, it becomes a quiet revelation. He gives us the essence of a moment, leaving our own imaginations to fill in the rest.



Gabriel Dauchot The Races, oil on canvas signed  
lower left, 47 x 19 cm,  
Provenance: private collection, Paris  
£680/ EUR 780/ USD 890

Gabriel Dauchot's world is one I never tire of visiting, and I hope you've enjoyed this brief stroll through it with me. Below, you'll find a few further photos of the works in their (original) frames. If you'd like to see more images of the paintings, I'd be happy to share an iCloud album with detailed views or a short video. More art can be viewed at

<http://www.sellingantiques.co.uk/skipplingsfinearts/>

where new 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century works of art are added regularly.

Best wishes,

*Tamara*

Appendix:



Imaginary Quays: framed size: 59 x 99 cm



The Top Hat/ Figure by a Réverbère:  
framed size 64 x 35 cm approx



At the Races: framed size 62 x 33 cm



Harlequin: framed size 23 x 13 cm



The Lovers: framed size 70 x 40 cm approx