

Press Release

Barbara Chase-Riboud. The Josephines
A celebration of the legendary Josephine Baker

Hauser & Wirth Monaco
6 March – 14 June 2025



‘My connection with Josephine Baker began when I first arrived in Paris in 1961 and found an atelier at 48 Rue Blomet. It was only after I had bought the atelier and I had begun to work there that I realized that Rue Blomet was the site of the famous Le Bal Nègre, where Josephine had started her whole career in Paris. Just next door, down the street. I thought it was this incredible sign that something was going to happen between us.’

—**Barbara Chase-Riboud**

Hauser & Wirth Monaco will exhibit a tribute by the renowned sculptor and poet Barbara Chase-Riboud to the legendary Josephine Baker (1905 – 1975), whose transatlantic life mirrors her own. ‘Barbara Chase-Riboud. The Josephines’ honors 50 years since the artist met Baker at her final performance (also the 50th anniversary of Baker’s death) and 100 years since the dancer made her debut in Paris. This landmark exhibition celebrates Baker’s enduring legacy through a striking artistic perspective, presenting works that embody the energy and elegance of one of the 20th Century’s most iconic performers. Following the close of her historic eight-museum retrospective in Paris, Chase-Riboud will present the two monumental sculptures ‘Josephine Black/Black’ (2022) and ‘Josephine Red/Red’ (2022) alongside complementary works, including the debut of new forms from her celebrated La Musica series (1990–2025) and works on paper.

Archival material, including extraordinary photographs of Josephine Baker performing in Monaco, will be presented, with the support of Archives Monte-Carlo Société des Bains de Mer.

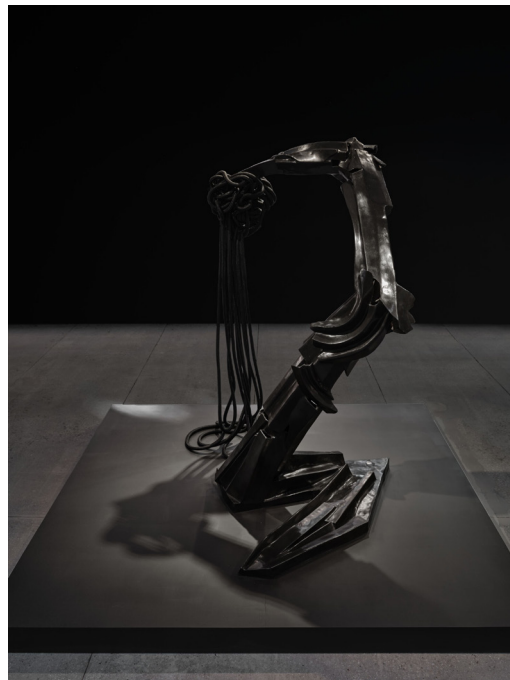
Chase-Riboud and Baker met only once, in 1975, backstage moments before her last performance at the Bobino in Paris. Chase-Riboud had been invited by her friends who opened the show, dancers Carmen Lavallade and Geoffrey Holder, who then brought her backstage to meet Baker. She recalls Baker’s transformation from a

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'little old lady' to the larger-than-life chanteuse who had transfixed audiences internationally. In 2021, Chase-Riboud attended Baker's induction into the French National Pantheon, the national tomb of heroes, which inspired the monumental sculptures on view.

About the Exhibition

'The Josephines' centers on two bronze sculptures from 2022 that pay homage to the legendary performer, civil rights activist and World War II secret agent Josephine Baker. Monumental in impact, these sculptures are from Chase-Riboud's ongoing La Musica series, which explores music, movement and stillness through bold juxtapositions of materials and forms. Rising two meters tall, each of the patinated bronze sculptures stand upon their own stage-like platform and combines hard folds of metal and sumptuous textiles. With thick coils of silk spilling down to the floor from their apices, these abstract sculptures nevertheless conjure inevitable associations with the famously sinuous limbs of their namesake.



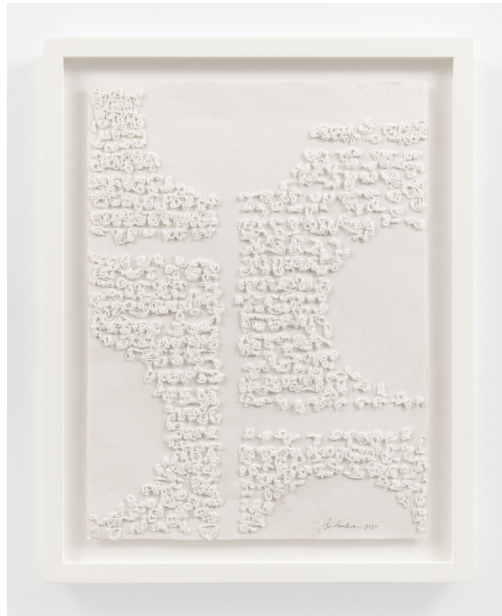
Chase-Riboud has described Baker as 'the epitome of movement, of jazz,' adding that 'The reason why I wanted to do Josephine was because it's a leap into space.' Reinforcing this, the artist has also associated Baker with futurism, an art movement which prioritised a focus on dynamism. Reinventing the idea of figurative statuary as monument, the artist instead proposes the sculptural embodiment of energy and movement. The resulting works, dedicated to rhythm and light, exude a commanding presence and offer a sensory journey through form, poetry and beauty.

Surrounding these forms, Chase-Riboud presents a special selection of delicate all-white works on paper. Achieved through a technique the artist has developed and perfected over the past five decades, these amalgams of sculptural relief and drawing are made by piercing silk thread through Arches paper. Evoking both the cursive lines of handwriting and figurative structure of hieroglyphics, they are formally and conceptually linked to Chase-Riboud's automatic writings and poems.

About the Artist

Barbara Chase-Riboud, a pioneer in art and literature, has long bridged disciplines through her work in a variety of media. Born in Philadelphia PA in 1939, Chase-Riboud currently resides between Paris and Rome. Chase-Riboud's sculpture and drawings are in museum collections around the world. She holds the distinction of being the youngest artist to enter the collections of MoMA, which first acquired her work in 1955 when Chase-Riboud was 15 years old. She has received numerous accolades, including the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize

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for Best Novel by an American Woman (1979) and the Carl Sandburg Poetry Prize (1988). Her groundbreaking exhibition 'Everytime a Knot is Undone, a God is Released', curated by Erin Jenoa Gilbert and Donatien Grau, made her the first living artist to exhibit beneath the Louvre's iconic pyramid. This unprecedented exhibition opened on 15 October 2024 and closed on 13 January 2025, with site specific installations of unique sculptures at eight museums in Paris, including the Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, Pompidou, Palais de Tokyo, Palais de la Porte Dorée, Musée Guimet, Musée du quai Branly and the Philharmonie de Paris. The first monographic exhibition in Asia dedicated to the artist will take place at Rockbund Art Museum in Shanghai, sixty years since her trip to China.

Additionally, her memoir 'I Always Knew' is now available in both French and English, published by Seuil Editions and Princeton University Press.

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Caption and courtesy:

All images:

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Barbara Chase-Riboud with 'Josephine Red/Red'
and 'Josephine Black/Red', New York NY, 2023
Photo: Grace Roselli

Barbara Chase-Riboud
JOSEPHINE RED/RED
2022
Red patina bronze with red cord
189 x 150 x 125 cm / 74 3/8 x 59 x 49 1/4 in
Photo: Thomas Barratt

Barbara Chase-Riboud
JOSEPHINE BLACK/BLACK
2022
Black patina bronze with black cord
187 x 150 x 125 cm / 73 5/8 x 59 x 49 1/4 in
Photo: Thomas Barratt

Barbara Chase-Riboud
Beneath the weight of angry pride
2020
Silk on Arches paper
75 x 55 cm / 29 1/2 x 21 5/8 in
Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer

Barbara Chase-Riboud
Drawing of the moon
2020
Silk on Arches paper
75 x 55 cm / 29 1/2 x 21 5/8 in
Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer