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| Lattier, Christian (1925-1978) |
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| Christian Lattier, nicknamed the ‘bare-handed sculptor’ by art historian Yacouba Konaté, was among the pioneers of modern art in Ivory Coast. His success was formally recognized in 1966 when he won the grand prize at the First World Negro Art Festival in Dakar. Despite this recognition, he died at age 53, in virtual obscurity in his home country. Lattier enrolled at the École des Beaux-Arts in Saint-Etienne (France) in 1947. One year later, he went on to study sculpture and architecture at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Paris is also where Lattier achieved his first artistic success, notlong after his arrival, his original sculptures designed with wood, stone, wire, and a strong hemp fiber attracted considerable attention. Among his most famous works is *Panthère,* the larger-than-life crouching rope panther for which he was awarded the Chenavard prize in 1954 – a prize awarded to the best students of art and architecture at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. In 1959 he was a part of the first Paris Biennale. Today, artists such Dominique Zinkpè recognize his influence on their work, and of Lattier's sculptures are deposited at Musée National de Côte d'Ivoire in Abidjan. |
| Christian Lattier, nicknamed the ‘bare-handed sculptor’ by art historian Yacouba Konaté, was among the pioneers of modern art in Ivory Coast. His success was formally recognized in 1966 when he won the grand prize at the First World Negro Art Festival in Dakar. Despite this recognition, he died at age 53, in virtual obscurity in his home country. Lattier enrolled at the École des Beaux-Arts in Saint-Etienne (France) in 1947. One year later, he went on to study sculpture and architecture at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Paris is also where Lattier achieved his first artistic success, notlong after his arrival, his original sculptures designed with wood, stone, wire, and a strong hemp fiber attracted considerable attention. Among his most famous works is *Panthère,* the larger-than-life crouching rope panther for which he was awarded the Chenavard prize in 1954 – a prize awarded to the best students of art and architecture at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. In 1959 he was a part of the first Paris Biennale. Today, artists such Dominique Zinkpè recognize his influence on their work, and of Lattier's sculptures are deposited at Musée National de Côte d'Ivoire in Abidjan.    Lattier designed sculptures made of strings and wire, concealing the underlying iron structure. ‘If I had made them of wood,’ he said, ‘I would be accused of copying my ancestors. If I had begun to carve stone, it seemed to me that I copied White people. I had to find something new.’ Lattier's corpus embraces a remarkable diversity of subjects and themes. He created monumental works on religious and historical themes, as well as representations of ‘ronde-bosse’ traditions and humoristic figures. *Panthère* seems far removed in spirit and intention from the emaciated *Le Christ* or his series of graceful masks.  One curiously fanciful pieces is a work entitled *Le voleur de coq, dit la Victoire de Samothrace* (*The Chicken Thief or the Victory of Samothrace*, 1962), and stands about 4.2 feet high. The title clearly refers to the statue *The Winged Victory of Samothrace*, a piece of Hellenistic sculpture, however, instead of the goddess of victory, the viewer of Lattier’s *Victory* is faced with what indeed looks closer to a chicken thief: a ridiculously slender, miserable wretch in a brazen, straddling posture, seemingly on the verge of taking to its heels at any moment. Lattier’s ironical approach to centuries-old traditions was not limited to European culture. West African ritual masks were also subject to his artistic reinterpretation. Around 1975, Lattier created a series of works entitled *Masque*, again combining his techniques and traditional – in this case African – motifs with elements of abstraction and minimal art.  Lattier returned to Côte d'Ivoire in 1962 in the euphoric wake of independence, but his prickly character put him at odds with the Ivoirian art establishment. Although he had exhibited in Europe, North America, and Brazil, his career at home, especially during the final decade of his life, was marked by conflicts.  [File: Lattier.jpg]  Figure 1 Christian Lattier, *Panthère*, Festival mondial des arts nègres, Dakar 1966 / credit Jean Mazel - *Archives des Festivals Panafricains* |
| Further reading:  (Konaté and Lattier) |