

Le Trieu Dien

Reminiscences of the Mekong River

Dates: 2019.03.09 - 2019.04.30

Venue: Galerie Dumonteil Shanghai

Address: Building 105, 199 Hengshan Road, 200031 Shanghai

Opening Hours: 11:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., Closed on Mondays

Galerie Dumonteil is pleased to present “Reminiscences of the Mekong River”, the solo exhibition of Vietnamese artist Le Trieu Dien (Lê Triều Điển, b.1943), featuring a selection of 12 works from his practices during the last two decades. Ever since his first solo show in 1968, the artist has never ceased to share his stories on canvas, recalling the ups and downs in his life as well as the Mekong Delta through his unique narratives that adhere to his feelings and emotions.

Ben Tre Province, Le Trieu Dien’s hometown, is one of the 12 provinces that comprise the region in southwestern Vietnam where the Mekong River approaches and empties into the sea through a network of distributaries. Although the colonial period and decades of war have left the artist with unhealed wounds, more often than not, the artist chooses to recall his most precious memory on canvas—the beautiful lively scenery of the Mekong River, and a cornucopia of local culture and customs: crisscrossed rivers, boundless rice fields, fragrant orchards, hardworking villagers, local temples, markets and folk songs...

Le’s work, however, looks more like a labyrinth made of geometry symbols and unrecognizable signs, as the artist has translated everything into his own language. On one hand, each painting is an assemblage of multiple images overlaid in the way that memory does — a specific person, object or detail emerges first from the blurry background of other scenes. On the other hand, Le’s narrative is characterized by forms of arrows, triangles, circles, spirals, etc., some of which are representations of real objects; triangle, for examples, can be a nón lá (Vietnamese Conical Hat) or the roof of a traditional house. The unrecognizable signs are ancient symbols from various cultures including the Viet, the Khmer and other minority groups that also share this piece of land for centuries. Though the meaning of most symbols has long been lost, they have penetrated well in the daily life of the southern area, visible from the writing on mountain cliffs to the motifs on religious architectures or tourist souvenirs. Behind all these, the true intention of Le Trieu Dien is to search his own honest expression that passes beyond mere representation and reaches an abstraction of direct emotions.

To Le, memories inspire his creativity and nourish his inner world, and through painting, he can invite the past to rejoin him and become part of his present, not only as reminiscences but also a reconciliation that enables him to embrace love, suffering, and glory from the past. Through the deceptively childlike stick figures and bright colors, Le embeds a rich context of culture and history into the picture, while achieving a balance of color and layering, and rendering it the dimension of time. Same as the use of symbols, Le’s colors and lines are never meant to be beautiful, but to faithfully recall the movement of his consciousness. For instance, the rich color combinations of the alluvial plain always find their way to appear in Le’s work as they have made such an imprint on his heart despite the vicissitudes of fortune.

“Reminiscences of the Mekong River” is not only a personal narrative of the past but also a strand of emotions that resonate our own experiences and memories. Interwoven by vibrant colors and dynamic rhythms, Le’s paintings are enchanting memoirs meant to be introduced to any audience group that enjoys a good story.

Le Trieu Dien (b.1943, Ben Tre Province, Vietnam) studied at the Phu Tho Polytechnic College in Ho Chi Minh City. He still works in the city and his work has been featured frequently in exhibitions at the Ho Chi Minh Fine Art Museum, also international museums and galleries in China, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, France, and the US.

¹ Since the mid-19th century, France gradually colonized Vietnam; during World War II, Japan gained a dominant position in Vietnam; 1946-1954, the Indochina War; 1955-1975, the Vietnam War; 1978-1985, the Sino-Vietnamese counterattack; since the 1990s, Vietnam has witnessed rapid economic developments and has become one of the emerging economies in Southeast Asia.



ABOUT GALERIE DUMONTEIL

Since 1982, Galerie Dumonteil has assumed a major role in the market of the figurative sculpture. Focusing on modern and contemporary art, Galerie Dumonteil has three gallery spaces in Paris, New York and Shanghai respectively. While the headquarters in Paris focuses on gathering a permanent collection of artifacts, the branches in New York and in Shanghai serve to preserve the zeitgeist of the Interwar Period and promote European artists from this epoch to both Chinese and American audiences through focused, themed exhibitions.

Established in 2008, Galerie Dumonteil's Shanghai branch, committed to strengthen the collaboration and professional ties within the art scene in Asia, is one of the first Western art galleries that has involved in the early stage of the burgeoning Chinese contemporary art.

Galerie Dumonteil is renowned for its group and solo exhibitions featuring artists who were active between the 1930s and 1970s such as François Pompon, Georges-Lucien Guyot, Rembrandt Bugatti, Diego Giacometti, Charles Artus, Marcel Dery, Pablo Picasso, Armand Petersen and Joseph Czaky. Through its extensive networking with artists and collectors, Galerie Dumonteil has become the leading gallery in terms of animal figures and objects depicting nature around the world. For more than 20 years, the gallery has devoted itself to the discovery of and promotion of talented contemporary artists. Today, artists such as Daniel Daviau, Jean-Marie Fiori, Helmut Koller, Eric Pillot, Jean-Claude Meynard, Rubén Fuentes, Hubert le Gall and Wang Keping, with their predecessors, share the walls of the gallery's three spaces in Paris, Shanghai and New York, creating a truly diverse group of objects for the appreciation of collectors.

Through a thoughtful selection of artists and objects which reflects the ideologies and aesthetics of the founders, Pierre and Dothi Dumonteil, the gallery builds up an unparalleled taste for its clients by showing selected French art from the 1930s as well as works by contemporary artists. Following the traditional model of marchand d'art, the gallery maintains a long term relationship with artists as their exclusive agent. The gallery's financial support for sculptors whom it has promoted has been exceptional. Putting much care into the management and distribution of the artist's works, Galerie Dumonteil out-stands from other art galleries due to its collaboration with artists' families, various foundations, and artists' estates. Furthermore, much more than a commercial gallery, Galerie Dumonteil, expanding its influence and involvement to other sectors of the art industry, not only offers bespoke art consultancy which aims to help clients form important and valuable collections but also leases objects to museums for special exhibitions.

Regularly collaborating with museums and numerous influential publications, Galerie Dumonteil has participated in multiple international fairs, including the Biennale des Antiquaires since 1990 and the PAD Paris/London since 1998. A member of the Comité professionnel des Galeries d'Art, Carré Rive Gauche, Compagnie Nationale des Experts, Syndicat National des Antiquaires, Galerie Dumonteil is a truly versatile and influential establishment.