

Jean-Marie FIORI
GOLDEN AGE

27 October – 3 December 2022
DUMONTEIL Shanghai | Bldg.105, 199 Hengshan Rd.
11:00 – 19:00 Tue. – Sat.

In celebration of the gallery's 40th anniversary, DUMONTEIL Shanghai is thrilled to present "Golden Age", the solo exhibition of French sculptor Jean-Marie FIORI. Covering the last two decades of the artist's practice, this exhibition is the first comprehensive retrospective of Fiori's work in China and a testimony to the thirty-year collaboration between the artist and the gallery. Featuring more than thirty sculptures, the show follows Fiori's creative lineage from direct carving in Alabaster, to cast bronze as the primary material, and later to lacquered bronze and functional sculpture, as well as forms such as biscuit porcelain and handcrafted rugs.

Solemn and innocent, this unlikely combination characterizes Fiori's distinctive style. Just as the artist refers his work to "L'enfance de l'art"¹, he wishes to rekindle a child's wonder in each viewer, as if being in another world —playful, animated, yet elegant.

Drawing upon the 'Golden Age', the exhibition traces the complexities of ancient civilizations behind Fiori's work. In ancient Greek poet Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Golden age² was once a time when men and God lived together, symbolizing the primordial peace and harmony; the "golden age" of society marks a period of high intellectual output in art, science, literature and philosophy. The ancient civilizations written in mythology were a combination of both.

What fascinates me in the art of "ancient" civilizations is first of all the wonder of the world.

—Jean-Marie Fiori

Fiori has always been able to extract new forms from these ancient wonders: "Daydreaming" from the ancient Rome Triclinium dining room, the "Hathor" lamp based on the ancient Egyptian goddess, the "Great Sumer" Cabinet and the "Sargon" Buffet inspired by Sumerian reliefs, the "Doge" table based on the ancient Persian Parthian winged lion, the "Great Gardener" inspired by the ancient Chinese ritual bronze vessels... **This pursuit of the sacred has become the inner strength of Fiori's work.** Yet no knowledge of these civilizations is required to "communicate" with these works. Just as we still admire excavated artefacts from thousands of years ago, Fiori seeks to leave his mark on the universal and the timeless.

All the beauty and the very meaning of Jean-Marie Fiori's work is held in his simple wish to touch our hearts and sensitivities most straightforwardly, comprehensible to everyone.

—Pierre Dumonteil

From his early career as a sculptor, Fiori has chosen animals as the main element of his work. The depiction of animals runs through the history of human civilization and across geography and culture. The animals also represent the variety of life: the strong, the weak, the wild, and the domesticated, etc. Meanwhile, the distinctiveness of each animal is a treasure trove that inspires the artist's stylistic creations.

¹ In French, "L'enfance de l'art" means "very easy to do, like child's play", while literally, it means "the childhood of the Art".

² The ancient Greek philosopher Hesiod introduced the term in his *Works and Days*, when referring to the period when the "Golden Race" of man lived. This was part of fivefold division of Ages of Man, starting with the Golden age, then the Silver Age, the Bronze Age, the Age of Heroes (including the Trojan War), and finally, the current Iron Age.

In recent years, Fiori has been increasingly interested in "functionality" of his work. He wishes to embellish every day, to fill it with wonder if possible. Each work remains above all a sculpture, while the function is another entry for the artist's increasingly mature language. Out of his love for nature, the artist has also created a series of 'garden' sculptures in addition to his interior pieces. These works question the boundary between "art" and "design", and their creator is simply fulfilling his role as an artist: to create and subvert everything.

Preciousness, sophistication, rarity, and a desire for perfection, are my criteria.

—Jean-Marie Fiori

Fiori's standards of quality are not only reflected in the choice of materials and craftsmanship—alabaster, patinated bronze, lacquered bronze, and bronze with ebony or palm wood, etc., **but also evident in the control of production**—all of his bronze sculptures are casted by Fonderie Deroyaume, the finest French Foundry in France, his porcelain pieces produced by the prestigious Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, and the latest collection of rugs made with precious Northern Tibetan wool by Studio Changphel, the well-inherited Tibetan rug workshop.

Over the past thirty years, Fiori's talent and dedication have earned him many admirations and recognitions, and his work has been included in important private collections around the world. However, when you look at his "beasts" and receive their "gazes", you will realize that the "golden age" of Fiori's work has just begun.

May my brave beasts, in their immobile serenity, provoke ineffable ecstasies in you.

—Jean-Marie Fiori

About the Artist

Jean-Marie FIORI (b.1952, Limoges, France) is a French sculptor who lives and works in Paris. Graduated from mural painting at l'École Nationale des Beaux-arts (BA), Fiori devoted himself to sculpture in the early 1990s, from direct cutting in alabaster and marble to cast in bronze, lacquered bronze and porcelain. More recently, he distinguished himself with his functional sculptures and enriched his imaginative "beast" mythology with public sculptures.

In 2009, the artist was awarded "le prix Edouard-Marcel Sandoz", the highest honor for animal sculpture. In 2012, he participated in the exhibition "100 Animal Sculptures: From the 1930s to Contemporary Art", Le musée des Années Trente, Boulogne-Billancourt, France. In 2014, his sculpture "Monument for a Horse" was exhibited at the Statue Square in Hong Kong during the "French May". In addition, his works have been exhibited in several major cities in Europe, North America and Asia and included in many important private collections.

Fiori's public commissions include Tour aux bêtes, Pinter Fondation, Majorca, Spain, 1997; "Dolmen de Serris" commission for La Cité des Enfants, Serris, France, 1999; Zodiac themed medallions for La Monnaie de Paris, France, 2000; winner of open call public art project of the Shanghai World Expo, China, 2010.

The artist has been represented by DUMONTEIL since 1993.