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Eternity *in*
TRANSIENCE

聯辦節目 | ASSOCIATED PROJECT



KWAI FUNG
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EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

Kwai Fung Hin Art Gallery is delighted to present *ETERNITY IN TRANSIENCE*, a group exhibition focusing on floral still-life paintings, as part of the associated project of the French May Arts Festival.

Centered around a 1930s masterpiece by Sanyu, the exhibition bridges historical and contemporary interpretations of the genre by connecting to 17th-century Flemish painter Wouter Mertens and juxtaposing with over ten works by modernist masters and contemporary artists.

Eternity in Transience explores the timeless legacy of still life paintings to capture the essence of different eras and the evolution of artistic thought. What began as a straightforward depiction of the physical world now encapsulates the intangible — capturing emotional depths, cultural dialogues, and infinite creative possibilities.

17TH
CENTURY

Wouter Mertens (active 1640-1660)



→ Sanyu (1895 -1966)

→ Bernard Cathelin (1919 - 2004)

→ Pierre Boncompain (b. 1938)

→ Michel Henry (1928 - 2016)

MODERN

CONTEMPORARY

Ziad Dalloul (b. 1953)



Denis Laget (b. 1958)



Atsushi Suwa (b. 1967)



Takanobu Kobayashi (b. 1960)



Sky Glabush (b. 1970)



Choi Soo Jung (b. 1977)



17th century: Realistic Depictions

During the 17th century, the Dutch Republic thrived as Europe's most prosperous nation, known as the "Golden Age."

Fueled by the wealth generated from international trade, artists began depicting a diverse array of material possessions. It was during this time that still life painting emerged as an independent genre, capturing the societal fascination with the beauty and abundance of material culture.



Jan Davidsz de Heem. *The dessert*, 1640. Oil on canvas

This era also marked the rise of "Pronkstilleven," or sumptuous still lifes, featuring meticulously rendered treasures like silverware, porcelain, and exotic fruits with lifelike vibrancy.



Adriaen van Utrecht. *Vanitas Still-Life with a Bouquet and a Skull*, 1640. Oil on canvas

Conversely, "vanitas" still lifes depicted symbols such as wilting flowers, skulls, and hourglasses, reflecting on the transience of life.

Garland Paintings

invented by Jan Brueghel the Elder in 17th-century Antwerp, and later adopted by prominent Flemish still life painters, are still life artworks that showcase a floral or fruit garland surrounding a devotional image.



Joris van Son. *The Virgin with the Child inside a festoon of fruit*, between 1643 and 1667, Oil on canvas

WOUTER MERTENS

Wouter Merten's vivid and realistic portrayal of fruits exemplifies the era's demand for exquisite artistry.

The selection of objects is a fusion of sketched observations, memories, and flights of imagination. He captivated the viewer's gaze through alluring imagery and intricate attention to detail, resulting in an awe-inspiring illusion—a mirage of reality.

Some of the fruits in the paintings have been opened, displaying tainted surfaces and irregular textures, which may allude to the idea of transience.



Wouter Mertens was a Flemish still life painter in Antwerp, renowned for his fruit still lifes and pronkstilleven. He is recorded as having held office in the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke in 1641-1642.

His works bear the influence of Jan Davidszoon de Heem, a Dutch still life painter active in Antwerp from the mid-1630s. Although only a few works have been attributed to W. Mertens, some signed as such without dates, he is recognized as a specialist in sumptuous still lifes.



Wouter Mertens

Floral Triumph with Putto and Nymph Heads

1661, oil on canvas, 150 x 115cm



Grapes

Symbolize fertility and salvation, linked to the blood of Christ.

Peach

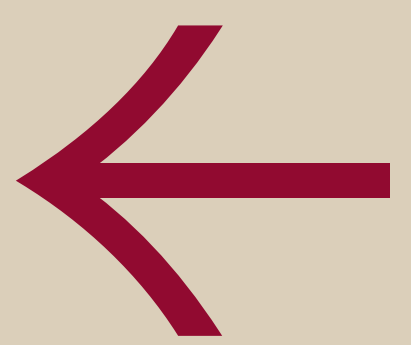
Symbolize salvation, truth, and fertility.

Corn

Symbols of resurrection and eternal life

Lemon

Associated with fidelity in Christian tradition, and represent wealth and luxury as an imported fruit.



BACK

Modern Art: Exploration of Sensual Expression

*“Painting from nature
is not copying the object.
It is realising one’s sensations.”*

—Paul Cézanne

With the rise of modern art in the 19th century, the observation of nature and exploration of techniques, colours, forms, and expressiveness became central to the artistic movement.

Still life emerged as a medium for artists to employ this subject to demonstrate new techniques and explore novel ideas.

SANYU

*"I don't have anything in my life.
I am simply a painter. As for my work,
when one looks at it, one knows well
enough what it is all about...
All that my works declare is simplicity."*



An early masterpiece by Sanyu from the early 1930s. This period of his work is often referred to as the "Pink Period," during which he explored oil painting as a medium. Sanyu had already developed a fusion of Chinese and Western painting languages between 1930 and 1932. His training in Chinese calligraphy and brushwork figure sketches, allowed him to depict object contours with delicate and precise calligraphic lines, conveying a sense of fluidity and lyricism.

In this phase, Sanyu predominantly used black, white, and pastel tones, creating a main tonal theme. His compositions embraced significant areas of "negative space," reflecting simplicity and ethereal qualities. By skillfully integrating traditional Chinese aesthetic concepts with the innovative spatial perspectives of Western modern painting since Cézanne, Sanyu departed from the pursuit of unified single-point perspective. Instead, he distorted or flattened spatial elements.



In this artwork, Sanyu juxtaposed a small table, flower basket, cup, and saucer from different viewpoints. A black color block divides the upper space, while the emphasis lies not on light and shadow, but on subtle color variations that suggest a sense of volume. The scraped texture adds depth and richness to the composition, creating a visually immersive experience.



Sanyu

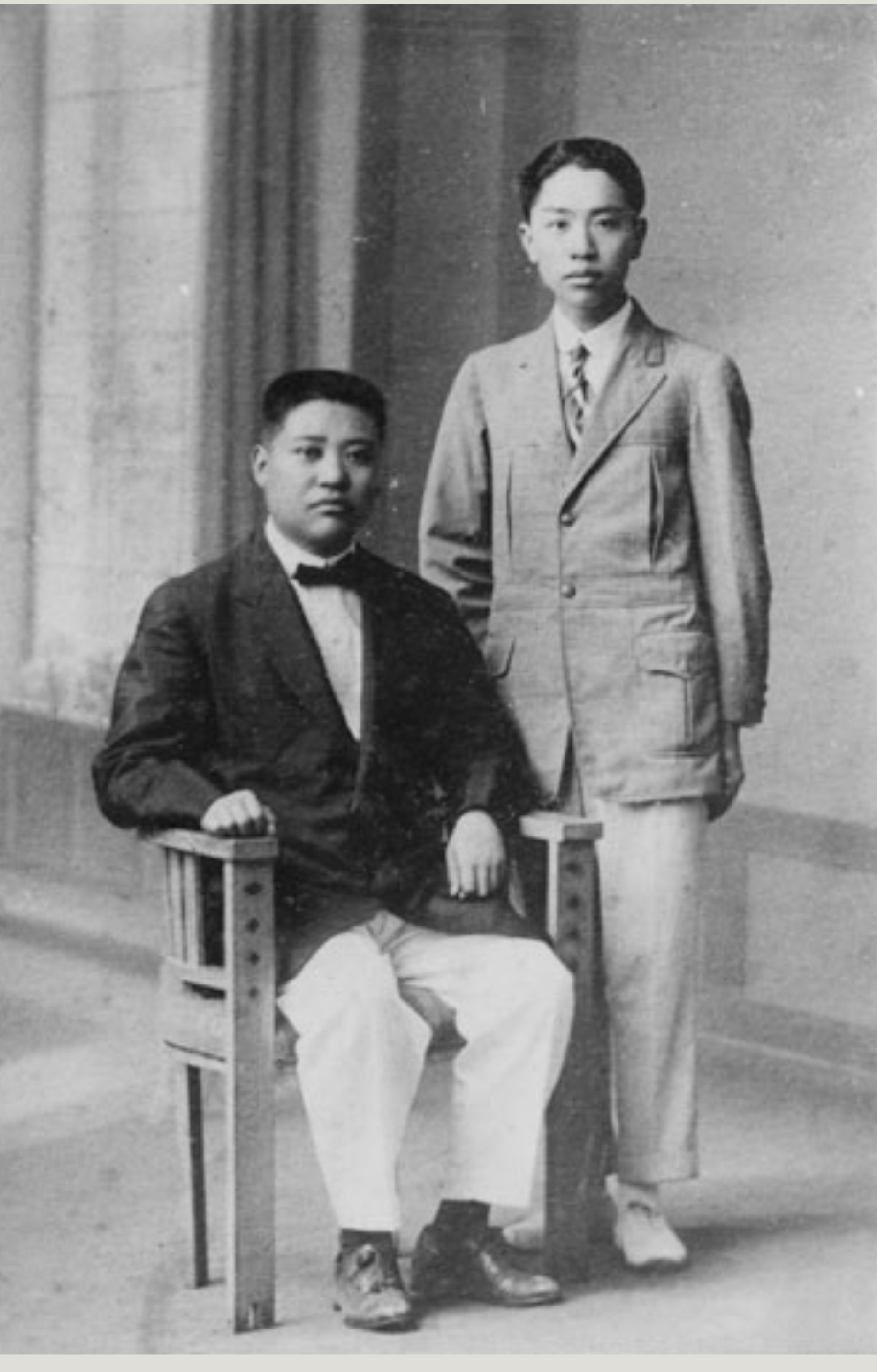
Compote of Fruits, Basket of Flowers, Cup and Saucer
1931, oil on canvas, 61 x 91.2cm

*While pink carries
a sense of romance,
it is within the expansive realm
that lies between "coloured"
and "colourless" where painters
find the space to unleash our
imagination and let it run free.*

—Antoine Chen, 1993

Sanyu

(1895 -1966)



Born in 1895 to a wealthy family in Nanchong, Sichuan, he learned to paint from his father and practiced calligraphy under the tutelage of Zhao Xi , known as the “foremost poet of late Qing,” developing a strong foundation in traditional Chinese art. Later, he attended the Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts

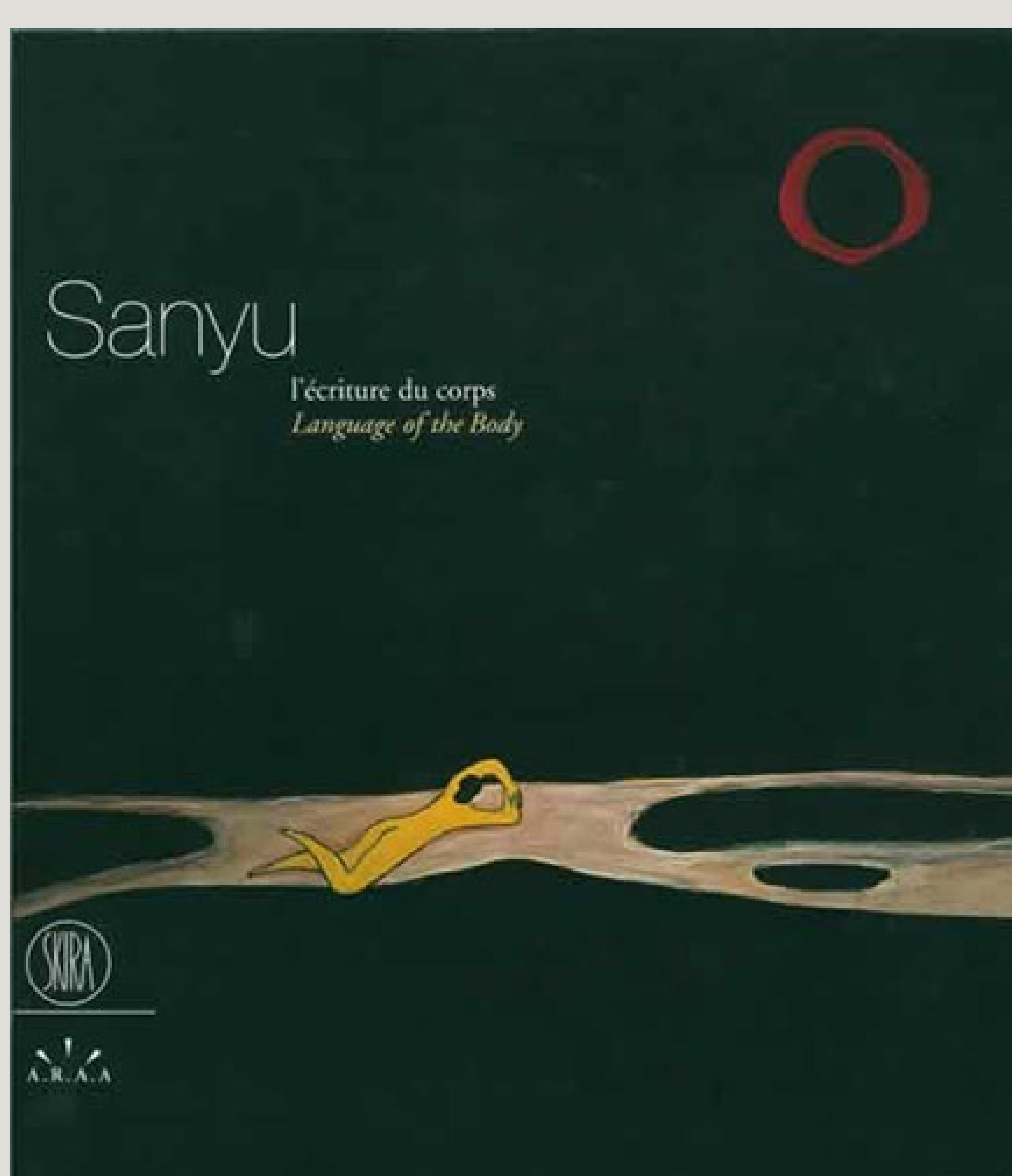
He traveled to France under a government-sponsored work-study program in the early 1920s, joined the ranks of Xu Beihong, Lin Fengmian, Pan Yuliang, and others.

He enrolled in the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, where he focused on sketches using brushwork, and frequented Montparnasse’s cafes.



Sanyu began working with a prominent collector in Paris, Henri-Pierre Roché in 1929, and began creating oil paintings. His artworks garnered attention and acclaim within the French art circle.

Sanyu continued his artistic journey in Paris until his passing in 1966 due to gas poisoning at his studio located at 28 Rue de la Sablonnière.



Sanyu - l'écriture du corps (Language of the Body)

In 2004, the Musée national des arts asiatiques-Guimet in Paris held an extensive retrospective exhibition, showcasing Sanyu’s works and receiving widespread recognition.

Sanyu produced 320 paintings and over 2000 drawings.

BERNARD CATHELIN

*“ To achieve a beautiful red colour,
I apply it over another one, scrape it to reveal
the underlying red, wait for it to dry,
and then use yet another red. I need to work on
a rich and thick texture. ”*



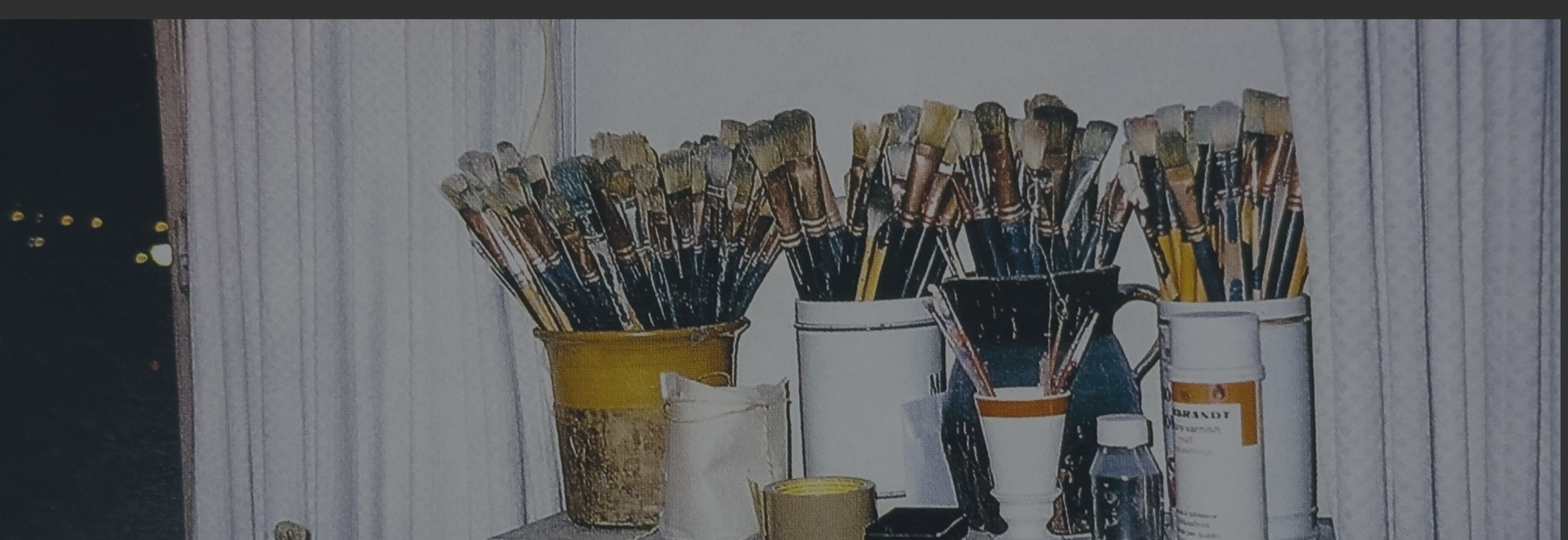
Drawing inspiration from the vibrant Fauvist hues and the ethereal tones of Les Nabis, Cathelin skillfully wields a thick brush and palette knife to encapsulate the very essence of blossoms. The “bouquet” evolves into a symphony of blurred strokes and dappled marks.

Cathelin eschews the conventional use of perspective or vanishing lines to infuse depth into his subjects.



The vase emerges as a sober mass, devoid of shadows that would lend it shape, while the table assumes the form of a colourful rectangle, an arbitrary space.

Cathelin’s later works challenge us to strip away, discard, and eliminate the superfluous references that still cling to a semblance of reality. The subject dissolves, allowing the canvas to take center stage as the solitary object of significance.





Bernard Cathelin

Les Roses d'Inde de Sylvia | The Indian Roses of Sylvia
1996, oil on canvas, 150 x 90cm

*Cathelin's style
is a quest for simplicity.
Paradoxical simplicity.*

*The more the painting's
"subject" is "in the background",
the more complex the actual
pictorial content has become.*

—Pascal Bonafoux

Bernard Cathelin

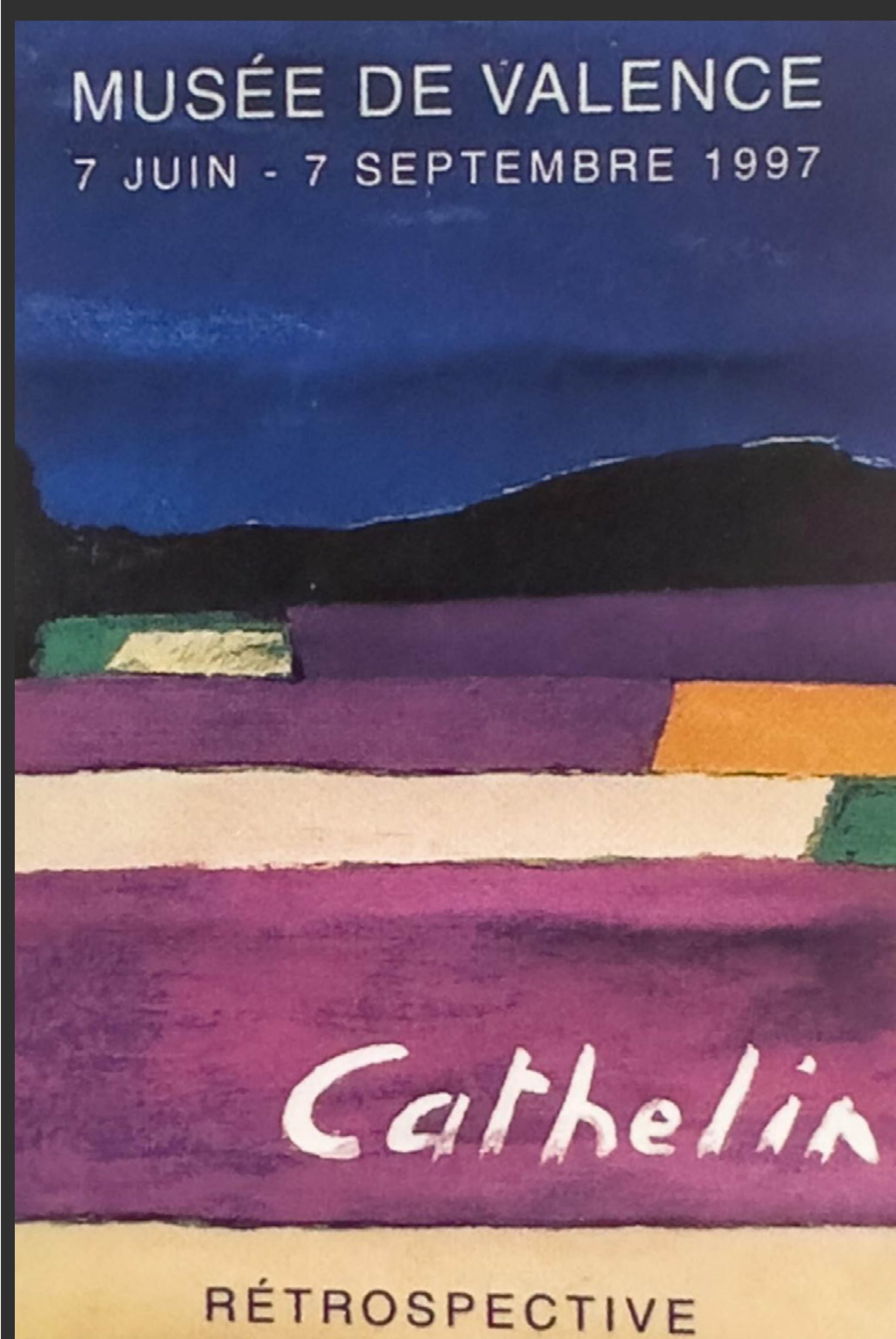
(1919 - 2004)

A celebrated French painter associated with the School of Paris.

He studied at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris.

His palettes were influenced by the countries he visited, including the Drôme, Mexico, India, and Japan.

In 1995, he was honored with the Legion of Honour by French President François Mitterrand. The Musée de Valence held a record-breaking retrospective of his work in 1997, and the Shanghai Art Museum organized a retrospective exhibition in 2000.



Retrospective exhibition, The Musée de Valence, 1997



Retrospective exhibition, Shanghai Art Museum, 2000.

PIERRE BONCOMPAIN

*“ I use false symmetry,
false perspectives,
all carefully considered
and arranged. ”*



Boncompain's work features a composition grounded by a brightly blue tablecloth with a red bird pattern. He illustrates the abundant and harmonious life that beats at the heart of a simple, unique sitting room, where the threads of reality and dreams criss-cross.

His rhythmic arrangement of objects and flat strokes expresses the quiet beauty. The color upsets the effect of perspective by imposing a vertical and plunging approach. He expresses the effects of the passage of time in an apparently unchanging indoor scene that goes beyond an aesthetic concern, evoking the relaxed ambiance of Provence in the south of France.



Pierre Boncompain

Tablecloth with Birds

2007, oil on canvas, 100 x 81cm



*But what counts in his eyes...
is the transposition of these still
clearly identifiable subjects,
into flexible terms of expression,
that is to say, the sensual pleasure
of geometric, emotional
and energetic order.*

—Jean Daleveze

Pierre Boncompain

(b. 1938)

Born in 1938 in Valence, known as the gateway to Provence, Pierre Boncompain is recognized as a modern French master, and inheritor of the colorist tradition.



Exhibition Musée d'Art Contemporain Saint Martin Montélimar, France

Over the last five decades Boncompain has exhibited in Asia, Europe, the United States, and throughout France.

Graduating at the top of his class from the French National Academy of Decorative Arts, he continued his studies at the National Academy of Fine Arts.



2002 Shanghai Art Museum, China

Today, he divides his time between Paris and Provence, alongside his wife and muse, Colette.

Important Museum and Public Collections

Centre Pompidou, Paris, France

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France

Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Art Museum, Japan

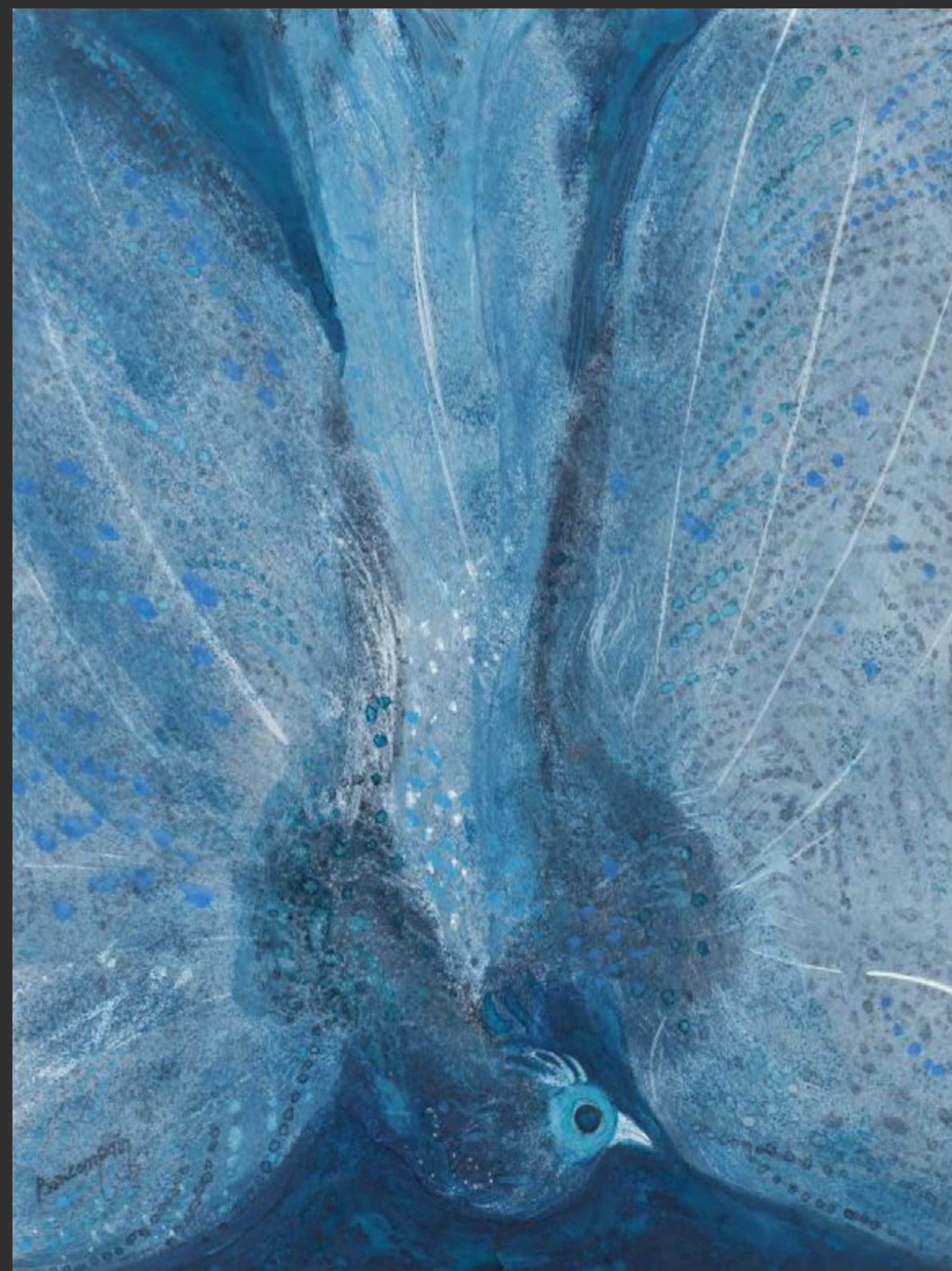
Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai, China

Museo de Zaragoza, Zaragoza, Spain

Singer Museum, Laren, The Netherlands

Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, Italy

Johnson and Johnson Foundation, New Jersey, USA



Portrait of the Non-Existent Bird (Portrait-de-l'oiseau-qui-n'existe-pas), collected by Centre Pompidou

MICHEL HENRY

“ To create is to transform your impressions into signs and colors by mixing your soul into them. ”



Michel Henry contrasts delicate interior florals with the expansive backdrop of Venice. Executed with both energetic and delicate Impressionist strokes, the painting captures the grandeur of its setting through the intimate lens of still life.

In his work, flowers transcend their mere existence and become integrated into the Universal. The fleeting elegance they embody serves as a captivating yet subtly poignant contrast to the profound Vanities of the 17th century.



Michel Henry

Untitled

Oil on canvas, 26.7 x 34.8cm

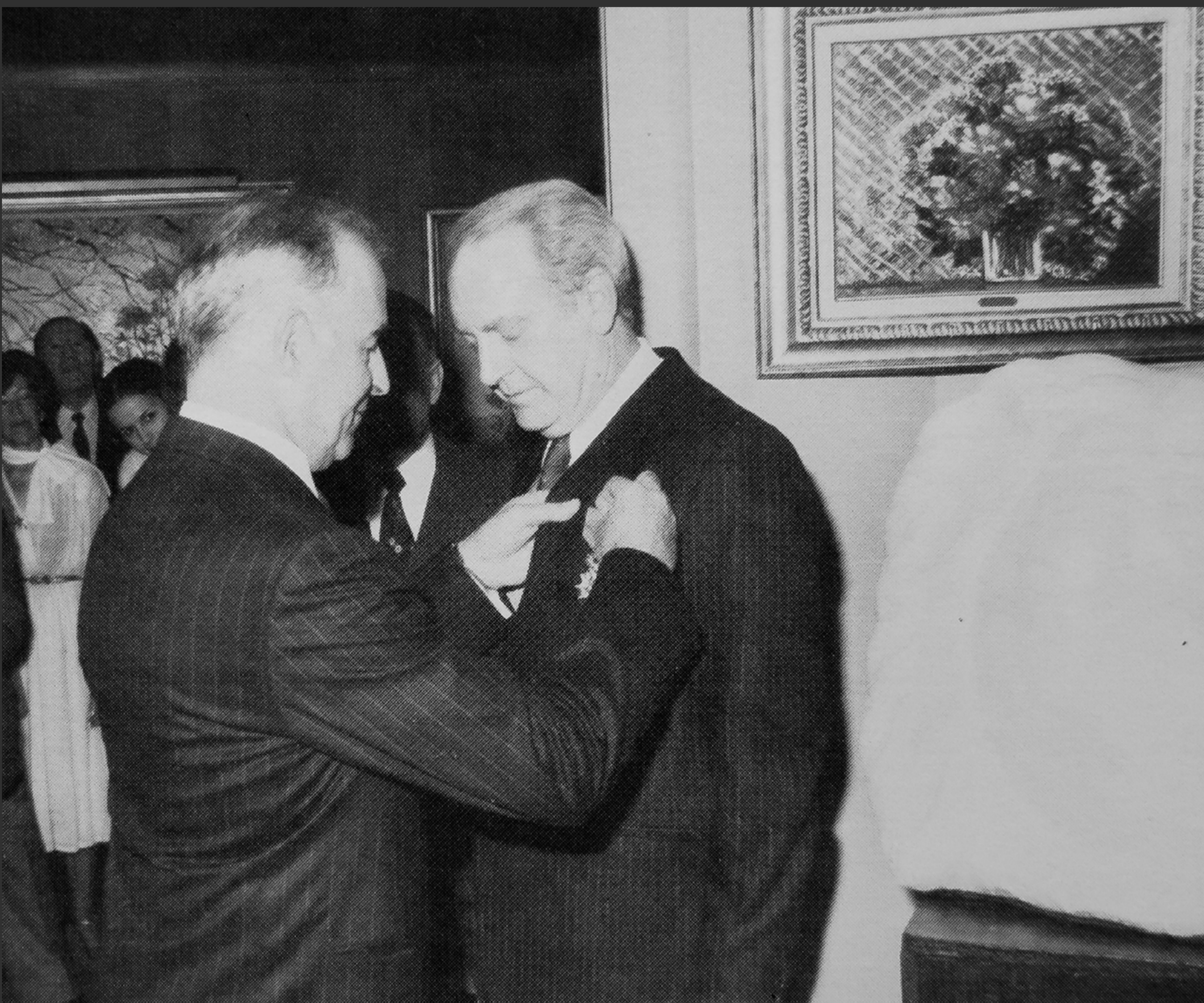
Michel Henry

(1928 - 2016)

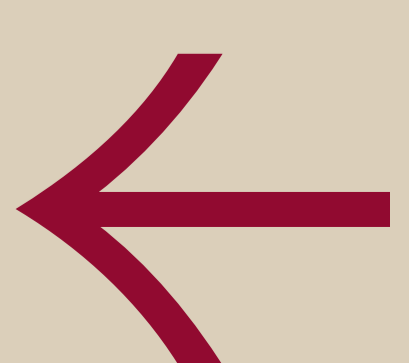


Michel Henry was born in Langres in 1928. He attended the Ecole National Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris and later studied with Narbonne, Georg, Chapelain-Midy and Legueult.

His works are in the collections of the French Government, the City of Paris, the Museum of Valence, Bogota and the Museum of Alençon.



He received numerous Prizes (Prix Antral, Young Painters Grand Prix of Fine Arts National Society, Prix of the Island of La Réunion, Prix of Franco-African Co-operation, and others) and medals, among which the Silver Medal of the City of Paris. In 1981, he was raised to the rank of Knight of the Legion of Honor. In 1983, he became Secretary General of the Salon d'Automne.



BACK

Contemporary Art: Encapsulate Emotions and Ideas

Contemporary artists use still life to encapsulate emotions and ideas, breaking cultural and conceptual boundaries through various artistic experiments, thereby rejuvenating the genre and showcasing its vast potential.

ZIAD DALLOUL

*“A shadow thrusting its way
in under the skin of a fruit,
which shape is cast
in the same mold
at that of fugitive forms.”*



Merging the internal and external worlds, French-Syrian artist Ziad Dalloul's works contemplate the essence of existence.

Rejecting the French term “nature morte” (literally “dead nature”), he opts for “nature silencieuse” (silent nature), derived from Arabic.

In his work, everyday objects like beds, tables, and curtains transcend their functionality to symbolize life and death, knowledge, communion, and mystery.



Ziad Dalloul

The Rite of Summer

2023, oil on canvas, 195 x 260cm

*Ziad Dalloul dreams
through painting...*

*allows you not to choose
but to bring together things
that a priori are separate:*

*nature and house,
inside and outside,
closed room and opening.*

—Pierre Wat

Ziad Dalloul

(b. 1953)

was born in Syria in 1953 and based in Paris since 1984.

In 1972 Dalloul moved to Damascus to study at the School of Fine Arts.

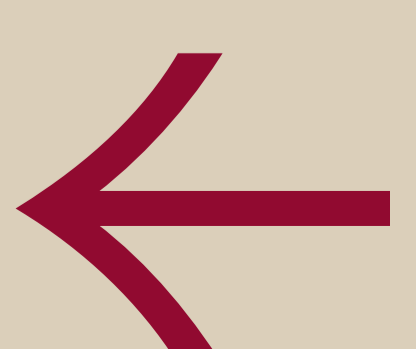
Between 1980 and 1984 Dalloul resided in Algeria, where he was responsible for developing the plastic arts program for Algerian schools.



On the edge of a wood (En lisiere d'un bois) , 2007

Skilled in painting, etching and artists' books, Ziad Dalloul is considered to be among the most accomplished artists from the Arab world.

He has been the subject of solo exhibitions in Paris, Italy, Belgium, Damascus, Jordan, Abu Dhabi, and Egypt.



BACK

DENIS LAGET

*“What interests me is the marginal,
the exception”*



French contemporary artist Denis Laget's paintings radiate a distinct and intense beauty. Despite their small scale, they feature a rough texture imbued with rich, murky colours that convey a sense of impure aesthetics.

Delving into the vanitas tradition, his depictions of decaying bouquets emphasize sensuality and remind viewers of the transience of material things.



Denis Laget

Untitled

2015, oil on canvas, 100 x 81cm

*The subjects embody
the dialectic of “still life”.*

*They are on the verge
of vanishing, they spoil,
they drop, they roll...*

*Impasto, thickness,
and grease are like
an obsession in Denis
Laget’s painting method.*

—Karim Ghaddab

Denis Laget

(b. 1958)

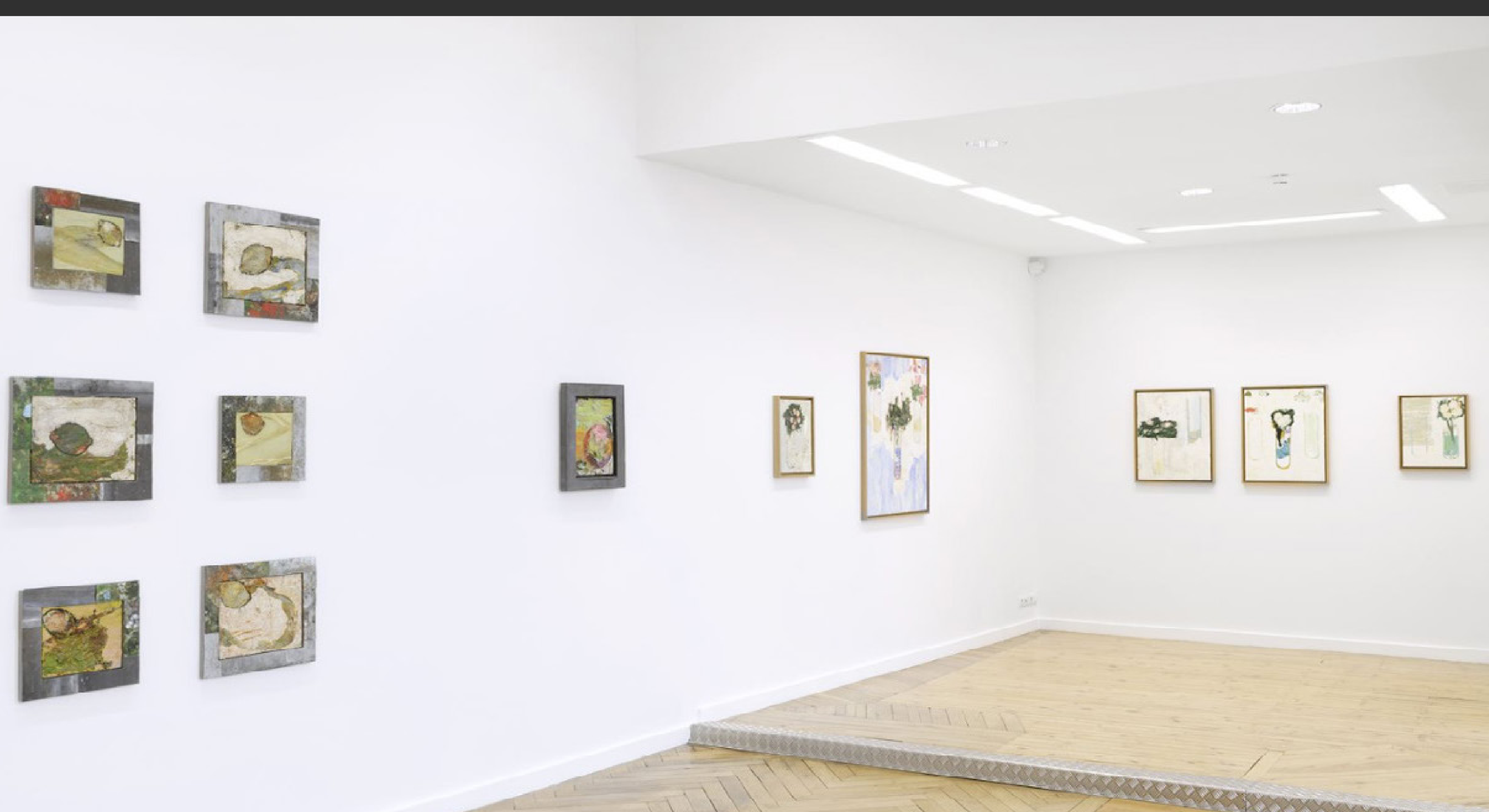
Was born in 1958 in Valence, a commune in southeast France and enrolled at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Saint-Étienne in 1976.



studio of Denis Laget ©Photo Manolo Mylonas

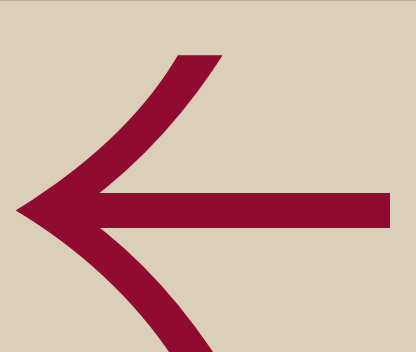
In 1991 he was invited to join the faculty of ESADSE (Saint-Etienne Higher School of Art and Design), where he still teaches today.

In 2006 he built a house in the Hérault where he stays and paints in the summer.



FRAC Auvergne in Clermont-Ferrand, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes, 2019

In 2019-2020 the artist was the subject of a major touring retrospective in his home country of France, which exhibited at FRAC Auvergne in Clermont-Ferrand, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes, and Musée Estrine in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence.



BACK

ATSUSHI SUWA

"I am attempting to expand the perception of seeing"



Japanese artist Atsushi Suwa's hyperrealistic paintings bewilder the senses, blurring the lines between reality and illusion. The black spots or flares in his paintings faithfully reproduce his visual conditions of scintillating scotoma, leading viewers to rethink the nature of reality and perception.



Atsushi Suwa

Fig Ver. 2

2018-2019, oil on canvas / panel, 33.3 x 45.5cm



Atsushi Suwa

Mixed Race Ver. 3

2018-2019, oil on panel, 45.5 x 27.3cm

Atsushi Suwa

(b. 1967)

Born in 1967 in Hokkaido, Japan, Atsushi Suwa studied oil painting at Musashino Art University, graduating in 1992. Two years later he was nominated by the Department of Culture of Japan to be an Overseas Art Trainee and traveled to Spain.

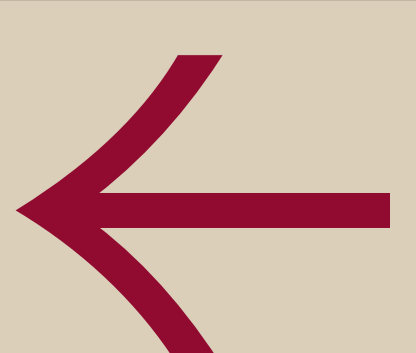


Installation view, *Suwa Atsushi: Fire in the Medial Orbito-Frontal Cortex*, 2022, Fuchu Art Museum

In 1995, he became the first Asian artist to receive the top award at the 5th International Painting Competition, presented by the Fundacion Barcelo in Mallorca, Spain.

After resuming his career in Japan, he went on to receive the Award for Excellence at the 22nd Rising Artists Exhibition, presented by the Sompo Japan Museum of Art in 2003.

In 2022, he held an important solo exhibition at the Fuchu Art Museum in Japan.



BACK

TAKANOBU KOBAYASHI

*"I feel satisfied if an impression could
evoke something in memory
and my painting would provide
a chance to cause this to happen"*



Kobayashi Takanobu enriches ordinary objects with meditative qualities through detailed portrayals and a muted colour palette, deeply connecting objects with personal emotions and the broader world.

His works possess a captivating charm, reminiscent of distant memories, while resembling a world of unreal stories.



Takanobu Kobayashi

Flowers / White

1996, oil on cotton on panel, 180 x 140cm

*No matter how much his
motifs may have changed,
his approach,
inspired by emerging images
to paint invisible things
- the faintly glimmering
hope of life that exists
side by side with death,
and aspects of
universal “existence”
- hasn't changed at all.*

—Kudo Kasumi

Takanobu Kobayashi

(b. 1960)

Takanobu Kobayashi is regarded as one of the most influential contemporary Japanese painters. He was born in Tokyo in 1960 and graduated from the oil painting major at Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Arts in 1986.



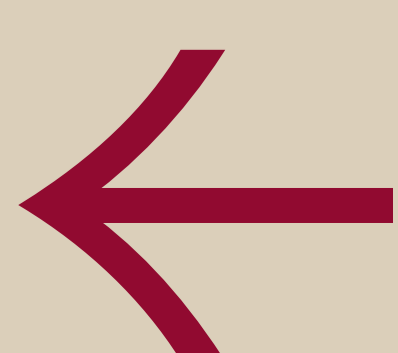
After receiving a scholarship from the Bureau of Cultural Properties, he stayed in Bangkok from 1996 to 1997. Since then, he has been working in both Bangkok and Tokyo.

In the spring of 2004, the Meguro Museum of Art held Kobayashi's solo exhibition. In 2014, he also held a solo exhibition at the Yokosuka Museum of Art.

His works have been collected by The National Museum of Art, Osaka, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, among others.



In Bangkok, 2000



BACK

SKY GLABUSH

"The architecture of the drawing is embedded in the materials."



Canadian mid-generation artist Sky Glabush often mixes sand into his paint to enhance the texture of the surface where colours interplay vibrantly.

Glabush's compositions skillfully blend linear geometry and organic elements, resulting in a nuanced interplay of patterns and shapes. The bold yet harmonious color palettes contribute to the meditative quality of his artwork.



Sky Glabush

Flare and glide off

2023, watercolour and gouache, 61 x 46cm

*Narrative has long been
deemed inessential
to the art of painting,
but Glabush seems to invite
the storytelling impulse
as we inevitably set about the
task of supplying meaning.*

—Sarah Milroy

Sky Glabush

(b. 1970)

Based in London and Ontario, Glabush is an Associate Professor of Visual Art at the University of Western Ontario.

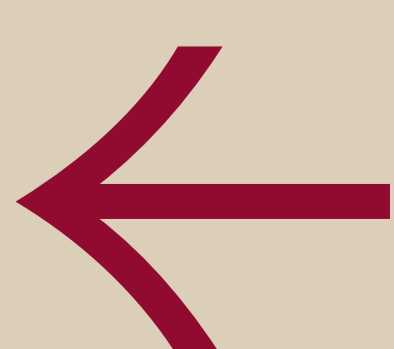
He earned his BFA from the University of Saskatchewan and his MA from the University of Alberta.



Studio in London, Ontario

In 2020 his work was exhibited at National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario.

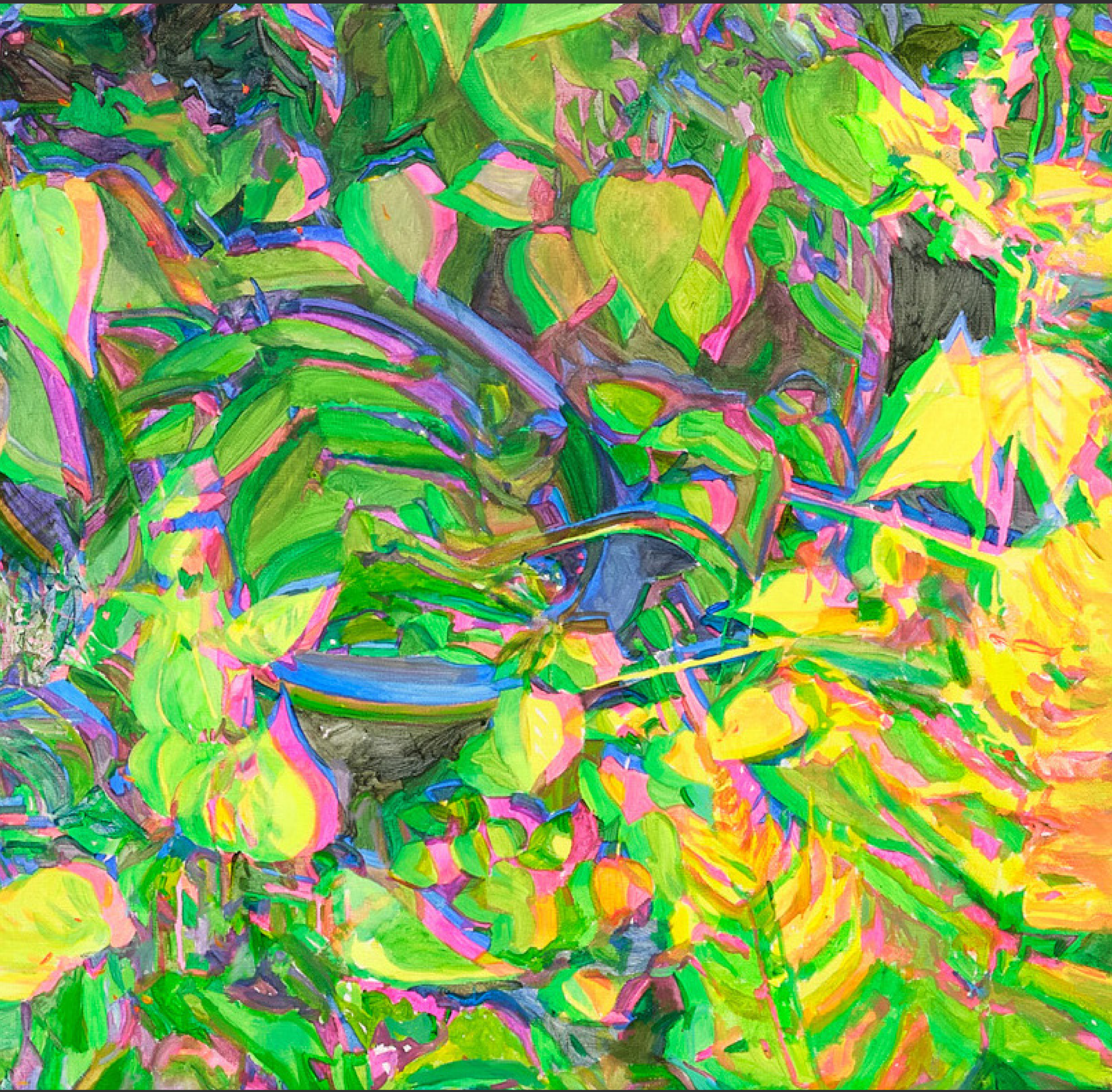
In 2024, Sky Glabush's work will be the subject of a touring solo exhibition organized by Museum London (London, ON)



BACK

CHOI SOO JUNG

“I have considered myself as an image rider, someone who records, analyzes, and imagines related concepts while riding on various images and things that I observe.”



Korean artist Choi Soo Jung stitches on canvas to create tactile sensations and reconstructs scenes based on digital colour mechanisms, crafting three-dimensional forms and visual illusions.

Her brush strokes create a volume over the surface of the canvas and bring a formative order and rhythm implying light beyond the canvas.



Choi Soo Jung

Refraction

2022, oil on canvas, 150 x 150cm

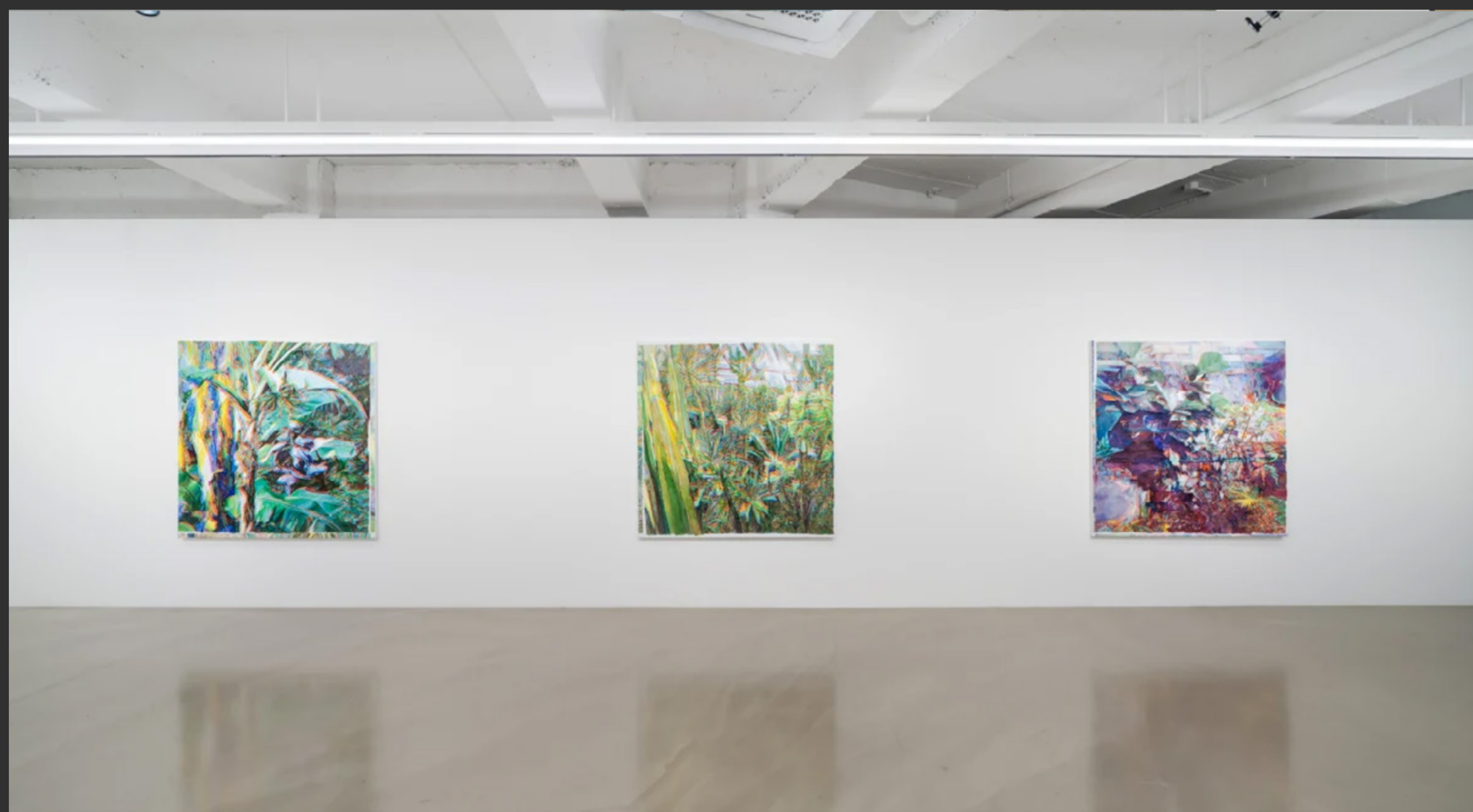
*Choi Soo Jung believes
that a frame of
consistent dimensions,
covered in sewing thread,
provides a stable structure
capable of gathering
and combining chance
occurrences and fragments
that induce leaps
and bounds.*

—Lee Sun Young

Choi Soo Jung

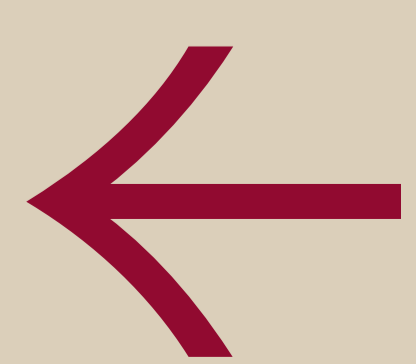
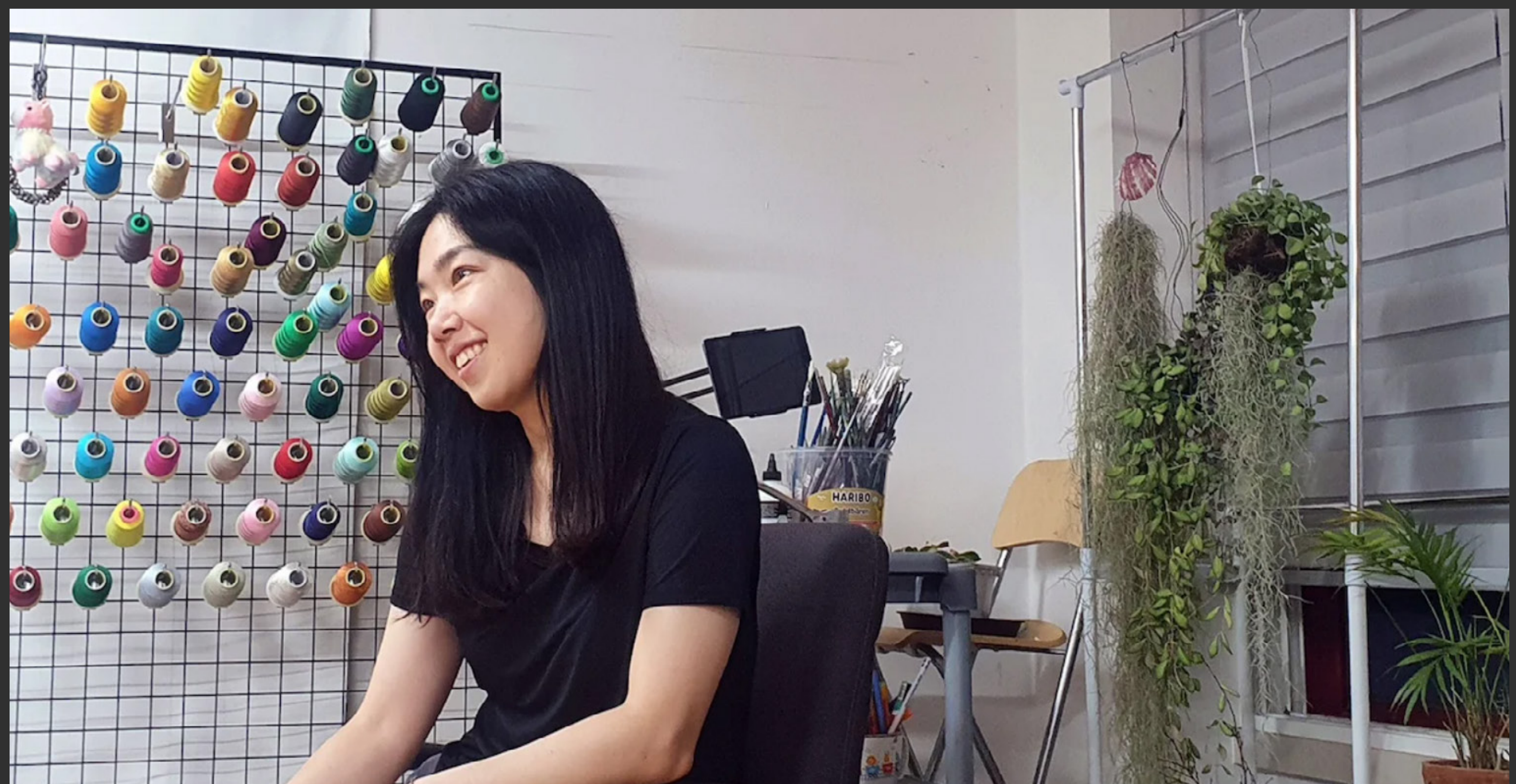
(b. 1977)

Based in Seoul, Korea, Choi holds a BFA from Hongik University and an MFA from Seoul National University and Glasgow School of Art.



She participated in group exhibitions at National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul National University Museum of Art etc.

Her works are collected by notable collections such as the Seoul National University Museum of Art and Moran Museum of Art.



BACK

聯辦節目 | ASSOCIATED PROJECT

