

Hom Nguyen

In an exhibition running from October 14 to November 20 at the Montresso Art Foundation, A2Z Art Gallery, Paris will present works by French artist Hom Nguyen. In addition, he will also have a solo exhibition 'Polptyque' at A2Z Art Gallery, Paris between 14 October and 15 November.

Massive, larger-than-life portraits make up the bulk of Nguyen's oeuvre. Using a variety of materials such as charcoal, gouache, felt, oil and pen, Nguyen creates complex, magnified depictions of people from all walks of life.

A self-taught artist, Nguyen was born in 1972 to a Vietnamese family in Paris. While his early creations revolved around faces of celebrities, recreated in a mass of lines and colour, he eventually diversified into self-portraits in a similar abstract style. In a series titled 'Sans Repères', Nguyen also explores the faces of Asian children through primarily black-and-white masks in an endeavour to connect to his Vietnamese heritage.

Working almost exclusively on human faces in his trademark line-heavy, experimental style, Nguyen recognises that there is no absolutely unique way to create a portrait. However, this doesn't stop him. "The faces tell a story," he says. "It's not their beauty or reputation that interests me. Rather, it's their expression."

In 'Sans Repères', for example, he chooses to draw his subjects without their lips, allowing them to tell their stories purely through the emotion in their features, spelled out in sharply contrasted light and shadow. Referencing the forced silence of Asian immigrants who arrive in France, unable to speak the language or communicate in any way except their eyes, his works are a reminder of the invisible and forgotten in society.

"Behind every mask, there is someone who hides himself and protects his story," explains the artist. "We don't need words to communicate. All emotions can be communicated through our eyes. However, some of us need to express ourselves with words, and with the language barrier, there is no way to do that. In this series, I wanted to show the inner cries of these people."

The Eyes Have it

FRENCH ARTISTS BRING EVOCATIVE PORTRAITS TO A2Z GALLERY PARIS
BY ILYDA CHUA




Wahib Chehata

In his solo exhibition titled 'Renaissance', French Tunisian artist Wahib Chehata blends themes of the Renaissance, Christianity and Romanticism in an exploration of the fantastic and the mysterious. Presented by A2Z Art Gallery, Paris, the exhibition runs from 9 September to 7 October.

In his 'Renaissance' series, Chehata examines the nuances of light, movement and sensuality within Africa through photography and painting, with the support of the Montresso Art Foundation in Marakkech. Drawing inspiration from the Old Testament biblical story of the Sacrifice of Isaac, Chehata reconstructs the famous scene in a series that emphasises the wealth of history, language and meaning behind the story.

In a work titled 'Abraham', a man gazes upwards in the middle of a forest as his child lies motionless in his lap, half-submerged in water. Colourful wreaths are strung around the necks of both father and child, a startling yet poignant symbol amidst what is otherwise a portrait in desolation.

Another work, 'Untitled', features another biblical reference, this time of the Crucifixion of Christ. A man stares straight into the camera, his eyes piercing yet unreadable. His palms face upwards, and a scar cuts vertically across the middle of his abdomen towards his breast. Chehata explains that the work is actually the central element of a triptych.

He adds that the inspiration for the paintings comes from real-life people; 'Untitled', in particular, was inspired by a man he met in Mali, in West Africa. "This man has a scar — it's the mark of an unimaginable violence, and yet this man continues to live and hope," says the artist. "It evokes the suffering of the body and its capacity to surpass the limits assumed by the mind." 

Left: Hom Nguyen, 'Life's Line', 2017. Images courtesy the artist and A2Z Art Gallery. Right: Wahib Chehata, 'Untitled', 2016. Image courtesy the artist and A2Z Art Gallery.

More information at a2z-art.com