



Pierre Le-Tan

*The collection of Mr X.
curated by Umberto Pasti*

PRIVATE VIEW

Thursday 27th September, 6 - 9pm

28th September - 19th November 2018

Tuesday-Saturday, 11am - 6pm

Tristan Hoare is delighted to present *The Collection of Monsieur X*, curated by Umberto Pasti. The exhibition will feature diverse grouping of artworks, chosen and arranged by Pasti, which will be illustrated in Le-Tan's distinctive style and exhibited around the gallery. The artworks will range from classical to contemporary and will be laid out in the gallery's Georgian rooms, which will be transformed into an eccentric collector's apartment, and presented as if he had just left the room.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Pierre Le-Tan was born in Paris in 1950, from a Vietnamese father and French mother. His father, a painter, son of Tonkenise Viceroy, emigrated to France before the war. Le-Tan learnt to draw at his father's knee, who frequently gave him old Japanese and Chinese books and prints. At 17, Le-Tan is commissioned by the *New Yorker Magazine* for his first cover, the beginning of a long and fruitful collaboration, and worked with many other American publications such as *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*.

Spanning over more than 50 years, Le-Tan's career has been rich and varied, from set design for film and theatre, to his association with his daughter's Olympia's Parisian fashion label and designing the cover of over 100 books and film posters. His close friendship with Patrick Modiano resulted in a number of collaborative works, with Modiano's melancholic prose serving as a perfect subtext to Le-Tan's reflections of a forgotten Paris, full of strange and endearing characters. One of Le-Tan's key publications, *Album* (1992), epitomises his intimate, eclectic style: a "scrapbook", full of past encounters with Greta Garbo, Christian Lacroix and Mick Jagger, holiday souvenirs, photos of old friends, hundreds of drawings ranging from his visit to Cecil Beaton's house to a cigarette box made by Picasso, Cardin shoes and a chair from the Palace of Versailles.

"I knew very early on that this was it for me and nothing else: drawing and my art collection". As a child, Le-Tan frequented Les Puces de Saint-Ouen, the famed antiques market near Paris with his father. He started collecting aged 7, and his Parisian apartment, previously Jean Cocteau's pied-a-terre, is full of lacquered Japanese boxes, Chinese ceramics, drawings by Giacometti, Warhol and Hockney, from ancient Greek antiquities to 18th Century Turkish carpets. Le-Tan's collection underlines his constant visual dialogue between East and West, the antique and the contemporary. His avid passion for collecting is reflected in his drawings, his minute attention to objects and detail, his careful curating of his miniature museums on paper.

Le-Tan describes himself as an entomologist, focused on detail and observation, using China ink to portray with a mixture of tenderness and cruelty his nostalgic and timeless interiors and characters. "His drawings must be read and his words must be seen" says his friend and writer Umberto Pasti – indeed, Le-Tan, who describes himself as Asian in his style of drawing perpetuates the Asian tradition of blurring the boundaries between what should be read and what should be seen, creating a wonderful and intimate visual language.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Umberto Pasti is an Italian writer, curator and landscape designer, living and working in Italy and Morocco. His Moroccan hillside garden is famous for the hundreds indigenous plants which he has saved from extinction. Passionate about natural conservation, Pasti has designed numerous gardens in Italy, Spain and Morocco, each one imbued with a story, designed around an imaginary character. His landscapes also feature prominently in his books, becoming the protagonists of his many novels and illustrated albums. Pasti fervently collects and curates objects in the same way he cultivates plants, seeking the rare and the endangered to create a bucolic, eclectic ensemble.



Rhouna Village Charity Exhibition Curated by Umberto Pasti

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Curious about the past of my village and tired of the decapitated plastic dolls hanging from the branches of the mastic trees around the courtyards, I asked my elderly neighbours to teach their granddaughters to make the toys they used to play with fifty years ago. In this way, Soukeina, Fatima Zorah and Amina made their dolls: the "arousa", brides of reeds and rags mysteriously similar to those preserved in the Quai Branly ethnographic collection.

We always need money: warm clothes for the winter, transportation to go to school, medical emergencies. Despite the generosity of visitors, the earthen money boxes that I place everywhere, even on the walls of the garden, are never enough. Thus I encouraged my young neighbours. Here are the mythological animals of clay mixed with hay and fired in the bread oven. And here are all objects and figures in unfired clay dried in the sun: Pegasus and Gilgamesh, hares and camels, Trojan horses, tractors, cars, guns, ploughs, and great goddesses whose hieratic forms are cloaked in dresses with the modesty of a school anatomy textbook from the Franco era.

Eventually, I felt that we were ready. I entered a fairy tale suspended between the world of Giacometti and the Art Brut, Douanier Rousseau and petroglyphs. With the arrival of objects made by intertwined fibres of dwarf palms - scenes of farming and the souk, other horses, other camels - I finally understood: despite the threat of globalisation, my village of shepherds and farmers, which until a couple of years ago was connected to the rest of the world only by a path hard even for mules, was indeed a village of artists.

And I realised that their toys were in harmonious dialogue with the wooden dollhouses made at night by my friend Mohammed in the slum of a nearby town when he smoked too much kif (he used to burn them before I asked him to give them to me).

This harmony between forms made by these isolated people, and the similarities between these and other forms produced over the millennia (at Mari, Lascaux, in Mali by the Bambara tribe on the banks of the Sepik river) raise complicated questions and could lead to easy simplifications from which it is better to stay away.

I suggest, to the public of this little exhibition, to approach it like me: abandon yourself to the pleasure of your eyes and touch, let yourself be moved, try to laugh. Imagine that a lost Moroccan village can resist the contemporary world, its flattery and its lies, thanks to the work of a handful of kids. This is, at least, what I wish for Soukeina, Fatima Zorah, Amina, Latifa, Mohammed Rubio, Mohammed G'bari and all my young friends.

Umberto Pasti

Also present in the exhibition, will be a selection of furniture by Najim, a resident of the Rohuna village. As a child, Najim was a shepherd, and today makes furniture inspired by rustic English 18th Century designs. Both the shapes and colours, wild and full of joy, say a lot about the gypsy nature of their maker, who works amongst donkeys and chicken in his village overlooking the Atlantic, a village lost in the heart of Morocco, but that is still very much a alive.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Tristan Hoare was based in Notting Hill at Lichfield Studios from 2009 to 2014. In September 2016, Tristan Hoare opened its new premises at Six Fitzroy Square, a Grade I listed building, designed by the architect Robert Adam. Tristan Hoare represents both emerging and established contemporary artists.

PRESS ENQUIRIES

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