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MU PAN 潘慕文



Mu Wen Pan was born in Taichung City, Taiwan, in 1976, and initially opted for art school as a means of escaping a career in the military. He moved to the USA in 1997 with his family and studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York where he earned an MFA with honors in 2007. He works in acrylic on wood or paper, and sometimes makes origami sculptures. He also has an abundant production of sketches and personal drawings. He teaches «Epic Illustration» at Parsons School of Design in Brooklyn.

A firm believer in humanity's basic need for narrative in visual imagery, Mu Pan describes his work as "quite simply about telling stories." In his intricate battle scenes, human figures, beasts and bizarre mixtures of the two come together in epic life-and-death struggles.

Halfway between Kuniyoshi, the great master of ukiyo-e, and Toshio Saeki, who pioneered erotic ukiyo-e, here stands Mu Pan. With influences ranging from Hong Kong cinema of the 1980s and 1990s to Japanese manga and kaiju movies, he incorporates elements of Chinese history and mythology to tell epic stories and legends with modern sensibilities. Mu Pan's artwork is never about art for its own sake – in his own words, "I am just an otaku who draws."

As an artist who tells stories of epic, large-scale battles, war is one of Mu Pan's primary inspirations. He often draws from the theatre of modern events to find inspiration for his work. "Usually, when I'm excited about something I saw or read on the media, or from my daily life, I first associate the subject with a monster or some creatures on a large scale, then think about who it will be fighting with."

With regards to his creative process, Mu Pan is about spontaneity and creating in the moment. He never creates preliminary sketches for a painting, preferring to work freely and make changes on the fly. As each painting progresses, it reflects the emotions and events of his daily life. "I let the piece flow with whatever is happening in my life," he explains. "This gives me the motivation to keep going day after day".

For Mu Pan, art is a way to channel man's energy, destructive power, and warlike disposition within the constraints of modern society. "I worship the strength of men and animals. I dream to have the dominating power to rule, to destroy, and instill fear into my enemies. Of course, it's impossible. No one can have this kind of power in today's world. So I created my own world for myself with my images. In my images, I can be whatever I want to be and eat whoever I hate. Every monster I draw is actually a self-portrait."

Solo shows

2019

Coleccion Solo, Madrid - Retrospective exhibition

Galerie LJ, Paris - 'The Sword of Mutual Demise' - Solo show

2018

Joshua Liner Gallery, New York City - 'Bright Moon Shines On The River'

Poulsen Gallery, Copenhagen - 'Battles Without Honour And Humanity'

Art Central, Hong Kong - Represented by Galerie LJ

2017

Galerie LJ, Paris - 'Treat Your Mother Right'

2016

Poulsen Gallery, Copenhagen - 'Your Mother Should Know'

2015

Galerie LJ, Paris - 'Fake Cover'

2014

Copro Nason Gallery, Santa Monica - 'One Inch Punch'

2012

3rd Ward, Brooklyn - 'The Way of The Dog'

2011

KunstRaum H&H, Cologne - 'The Other Mountain and The Other Sea'

Group shows (selected)

2019

Art Central, Hong Kong - Represented by Galerie LJ

Art On Paper, New York - Represented by Poulsen Gallery

2018

Art Herning, Denmark - Represented by Poulsen Gallery

Art Central, Hong Kong - Represented by Galerie LJ

2017

Art On Paper, New York City - Represented by Poulsen Gallery

Art Central, Hong Kong - Represented by Galerie LJ

Art Herning, Denmark - Represented by Poulsen Gallery

2016

Pulse Miami Beach, Miami - Represented by Poulsen Gallery

Texas Contemporary, Houston - Represented by Poulsen Gallery

Pulse New York, New York City - Represented by Poulsen Gallery

2015

YIA Art Fair, Paris - represented by Galerie LJ

Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles - Giant Robot Biennale IV, curator: Eric Nakamura

Worcester Art Museum, Boston - 'Samurai', curator: Eric Nakamura

2014

Galerie LJ, Paris

2013

Musée de l'Art Brut (Halle Saint Pierre), Paris - 'Hey ! Part II'

Copro Nason Gallery, Santa Monica - 'Futurology'

2012

KunstRaum H&H, Cologne - 'Sommerloch 2012 Silly Season 2012' - Exposition collective

Nancy Margolis Gallery, New York - 'Permanent Collection'

2011

KunstRaum H&H, Cologne - 'Sommerloch 2011'

Los Angeles - 'La Luz de Jesus 25th Anniversary Group Show'

New York - 'Verge : Art Brooklyn' KunstRaum H&H, Cologne - 'Silly Season 2011'

2010

KunstRaum H&H, Cologne - 'Silly Season 2010'

2009

Taipei, Taiwan - '2009 GEISAI Taiwan' Scion Installation

LA Gallery, Los Angeles - 'Papershapers'

Dr. M. T. Geoffrey Yeh Art Gallery, St. John's University, Queens, New York - 'Kerpoof!'

The Green Onion, Brooklyn - 'Windows Brooklyn'

2008

Cheryl Pelavin Fine Arts LLC, New York - 'Friends'

2007

Visual Arts Gallery, New York - 'Thesis Show'

La Luz De Jesus Gallery, Los Angeles - 'To All My Relations'

2006

Visual Arts Gallery, New York - 'The Book Show'

Red Letter Gallery, Tampa (FL) - 'The Typewriter Show'

Changing Room Gallery, New York - 'The Unforgiving Drawing Show'

2005

Compound Gallery, Portland - 'The Ghost and Specters'

Compound Gallery, Portland - 'The Superhero Group Show'

Fuse Gallery, New York - 'Winter Group Show'

2004

Meltdown Gallery, Los Angeles - 'Meathaus @ Meltdown Group Show'

2003

Memphis University, Memphis - 'The Social Affair Group Show'