

Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle

Thu Van Tran

We see gold and purple

Dec 09, 2023 – Feb 17, 2024

Opening: Friday, Dec 08, 2023 / 6 – 9 pm



Thu Van Tran, Colors of grey, 2023, lime and pigment on linen canvas, 130 x 180 cm, © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2023.

In her third solo exhibition at Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Thu Van Tran focuses on the painterly nuances of her work group *Colors of grey*, ongoing since 2012. Whether on paper, canvas, or large walls, the French-Vietnamese artist has repeatedly succeeded in developing new facets within this series.

The colors have become increasingly intense and luminous, they are no longer linearly separated on the margins but run out in semicircles. The blurred, gray surface also takes on cloud-like forms and lends more depth to the rush of color. At times the thicker application of paint produces craquelure. These are altogether techniques that tie the series to Thu Van Tran's overall oeuvre, which reflects the post-colonial history of her home country of Vietnam on a visual, material, and poetic level, providing a new perspective imprinted by western and eastern approaches of reality. Clouds and fog appear in the *Rainbow Herbicides* and *Trail Dust* series, while craquelure areas can be found again and again in the *From Green To Orange* series or the *Penetrables*, which are also known for their fluid traces of color.

What the *Colors of grey* have in common is the layered application of the six pigment colors white, pink, blue, green, purple, orange and the nebulous veil of grey on the picture surface. Lurking behind these colors is a reference to the herbicide Agent Orange, which was used by the US military during the Vietnam War in the 1960s. The negative after-effects of the military operation on the flora and fauna, as well as on the health of the Vietnamese population, are still present today.

The oxymoron in the title, *Colors of grey*, emphasizes the ambiguous pictorial effect of these paintings, which on the one hand embody an abstract, gestural painting and on the other point to the cruel effects of these chemical rainbow colors. Thu Van Tran makes the subtle, enduring contamination of such cruelties palpable in her painterly expression. The saturation of the colors varies. Thus, one seems sometimes closer, sometimes further away from the haze of these multicolored events on the canvas, always oscillating between the opposite poles of sensuous, gestural painting and historical facts.

Thu Van Tran's conceptual approach as well as the constantly recombined vocabulary of her own and literary quotations, as here in the exhibition title *We see gold and purple*, which goes back to Jacques Roubaud, bring forth a highly poetic Œuvre exploring the complex tensions between identity and language. The title once again emphasizes the allegorical effect of her works, most of which also visualize natural phenomena. The two complementary colors appear in sunrises and sunsets, for example, but also play a major role in the *Colors of grey* and must be precisely harmonized so as not to cancel each other out. The artist shares Roubaud's approach of using color and physical laws to communicate the inner vision.

Thu Van Tran (b. 1979 in Ho-Chi-Minh City, Vietnam) lives and works in Paris. The MAMAC in Nice is currently showing a large-scale solo exhibition. In 2023, the Friends of Kunsthalle Hamburg awarded her the Rosa Schapire Art Prize. Her works have recently attracted international attention as part of the group shows *Avant l'Orage* at the Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection and *Réclamer la terre* at the Palais de Tokyo, both in Paris. For the 58th Carnegie International, Thu Van Tran created large-format frescos on the walls of the sculpture hall of the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh with the pigments from *Colors of grey*. (Johanna Singer)

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