

Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle

Thu Van Tran

Colors of grey

Feb 8–Mar 30, 2019

Opening: Thursday, Feb 7, 2019, 7–9 p.m.

The artist is present



Thu Van Tran, Colors of grey, 2019, pigment on paper, 150 x 210 cm.

French-Vietnamese artist Thu Van Tran's work is deeply entwined with her processing and contemplating her own origins. Born in Vietnam, she arrived in France a refugee at the age of two. Her personal history, rooted in a collective mind, is marked by wartime and migrant experiences that she conveys in her works. To give voice to the past, the artist utilizes various materials and media—rubber, pigment, photography, and six specific, ever-recurrent colors that symbolize wartime experiences and some of the most grueling human-rights and environmental abuses in modern times. In her first exhibition at Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Thu Van Tran is showing works from the series *Colors of grey*, consisting of a fresco and drawings. Some other works as drawings and sculptures refer to the equilibrium between beauty and violence often recurrent in her work.

The *Colors of grey* are generated by the systematic application of layers of white, pink, blue, green, purple, and orange. Since nothing happens by accident in Thu-Van Tran's art, the combination of colors is also not arbitrary: In 1965, the US military used so-called "Rainbow Herbicides" in the Vietnam War. Sprayed from aircraft and helicopters, these highly toxic chemicals wreaked havoc on the dense foliage, killed hundreds of thousands of the targeted areas' inhabitants, and contaminated the environment and food sources of the population for decades. The chemical defoliant's enormous effects are still felt today, poisoning the environment on a vast scale and causing health problems in about one million Vietnamese people.

Unsettled by the effects of the war and, at the same time, fascinated by the sublime cruelty of the events, Thu Van Tran began to explore one of the longest conflicts of the twentieth century in her art. She was surprised to learn that the barrels of "agents," as the chemical defoliants were called, were marked with color-coded strips of white, pink, blue, green, purple, and orange—six colors imbuing Thu Van Tran's works with a poetic and highly aesthetic quality. The artist uses the colors as a kind of code herself: Layer by layer, she applies the colors individually to paper or directly to the wall. Mixing the colors creates a combination of an abstract gray palette, while the six individual colors frame the image as a rainbow, thus pointing to the many layers of the color combinations behind the surface. It is only after they have been decoded that their underlying symbolism is revealed to the viewer: the collective trauma, the loss and pain behind the ostensibly airy, beautiful scenery.

Works by the young artist were shown, amongst others, at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, the 57th Venice Biennale, and at the Neue Berliner Kunstverein. In 2018 she was nominated for the Marcel Duchamp Prize and exhibited works at the Centre Georges Pompidou. Today, her works can be found around the globe in public and private collections such as the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris, the Kadist Foundation Paris/San Francisco, the Lidice Memorial, the Josée & Marc Gensollen Collection, and the Vehbi Koç Foundation in Istanbul. In 2019, Thu Van Tran will take part in a residency program at the Times Museum in Guangzhou, China. Since 2012, Tran has been teaching a bachelor course at the PCA Paris College of Art. (S.Sokolov)

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