PHILIPPE PASQUA
Opera Gallery London is pleased to present an exhibition of original artworks by the passionate and fascinating self-taught French artist Philippe Pasqua.

Born in 1965, he has dedicated his life to painting, drawing and sculpture since the early 1990’s and has since gained recognition as one of the most significant artists of his generation. Recently he has been exhibited in international museums, art foundations and international art fairs.

Only a mere portion of Pasqua’s work is usually exposed to the general public and even the art connoisseurs. Therefore through this exhibition we intend to provide a broader and more complete insight into his art. The show will include Pasqua’s signature large palimpsests and provocative nudes, as well as sensual up close and personal portraits, also introducing a rare tattooed vanitas and skull sculptures.

Sometimes referred to as “the French Francis Bacon”, Philippe Pasqua’s art has also been compared to that of Lucien Freud and Jenny Saville - undoubtedly due to their unswerving carnal aspect - and his sculptures to those of Damien Hirst’s. Intrinsically, his turbulent and singular style, described by Pierre Restany as “spontaneous realism”, lies in an obsession most evident in his skulls; to getting beneath the skin of the model, capturing deep into their soul’s “as it flies away”.

The result is, as the art critic David Rosenberg once wrote, “an exceptionally violent physical shock (...), a vision of surgical precision”. Pasqua does not represent skin, he says, but flesh.

We hope your journey through Philippe Pasqua’s carnal universe will bring you deep beyond the skin of humanity and, through that, a bit closer to your own soul.

Gilles Dyav
Founder and Chairman
Opera Gallery Group

Jean-David Malat
Director
Opera Gallery London
Untitled • Mixed media on paper laid down on canvas • 200 x 150 cm • 78.7 x 59.1 in.
Untitled • Mixed media on paper laid down on canvas • 200 x 150 cm • 78.7 x 59.1 in.

AS WITH ROLAND BARTHES’ MYTHOLOGIES, PASQUA HAS AN INNATE SENSE OF HOW TO DEBUNK AND CELEBRATE TODAY’S ICONS. CONSIDER HIS TATTOOED FERRARI: MECHANICS AS SENSUAL AS SOFT SKIN. A MODERN MAORI TRIBAL TOTEM. A DELIRIOUS TAKE ON THE INTENSE, BORN IN THE ARTIST’S SUBCONSCIOUS IRONY, PLAYFUL AND LUSTFUL. BUT PASQUA DOESN’T SETTLE ON THE MERELY DELIRIOUS. HE CREATES. AND THIS PARTICULAR CREATION, A PRIZE THAT MANY INTERNATIONAL FIRMS WOULD LOVE TO POSSESS, IS SUSPENDED SIDWAYS, VERTICALLY ENTHRONED ON AN IMAGINARY ROAD.
Untitled • Mixed media on paper laid down on canvas • 200 x 150 cm • 78.7 x 59.1 in.
IT’S ALSO A QUASI-SPIRITUAL ATTEMPT TO EPI TOMIZE THE PRET ENTIous.
SKULLS HAVE BEEN DECORATED WITH BUTTERFLIES: BLACK SKULLS,
CRIMSON SKULLS, GLOWING MOTHER-OF-PEARL SKULLS, EVEN TATTOOED
SKULLS REFLECTING OFF EACH OTHER IN WHAT SEEMS TO BE A GAME OF
MIRRORS. SOMEWHERE BETWEEN ECC LEIAS TES AND THE LADY FROM
SHANGHAI, BETWEEN THE BEGINNING OF TIME AND THE DAWNING OF
HOLLYWOOD; AN ARTISTIC URGE CONNECTING ETERNITY’S EPHEMERAL
DOTS. THOSE WHO ARE FAMILIAR WITH PHILIPPE PASQUA’S WORK
WILL UNDERSTAND THE USE OF A SHRUNKEN JIVARO SKULL... AND HAVE
ALREADY PONDERED HIS MORE MONUMENTAL WORKS OF BUTTERFLIES
GLUED TOGETHER TO FORM A MAGIC SKY... SO BLUE... SO DRENCHED
IN SUNLIGHT...

THESE VANITIES FURTHER REPRESENT THE MEETING OF THE CIVILIZED
AND THE SAVAGE: A MAJOR THEME THROUGHOUT HIS WORK. THE
ARTIST NOW SEEMS TO FOCUS ON ANIMAL SKULLS THAT HAVE BEEN
TATTOOED, LACQUERED, ENCRUSTED... MAGNIFIED TO THE POINT OF
CONSECRATION. FROM HUMAN VANITY TO THE ANIMAL... THE
ARROGANCE OF THE LIVING; THEIR GLORIFICATION AS WELL.
Untitled • Mixed media on paper • 40 x 30 cm • 15.7 x 11.8 in.
Untitled • Mixed media on paper laid down on canvas • 200 x 150 cm • 78.7 x 59.1 in.
Untitled • Mixed media on paper laid down on canvas • 200 x 150 cm • 78.7 x 59.1 in.
AND THEN THERE ARE THE PORTRAITS. FACES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN IMPORTANT IN PHILIPPE PASQUA’S WORK: FACES AND BODIES AS THE UBIQUITOUS COMPONENTS OF HIS PERSONAL PANTHEON. A HOLY HOUSE OF HEROES, THEIR BODIES DISLOCATED AND DISMEMBERED. DIONYSUS IN THE ABSENCE OF APOLLO. IN THE KINGDOM OF ART, THE INVALID RULES. AND NOWADAYS, QUITE NATURALLY AND SPIRITUALLY... IT HAS BECOME THE BLIND. IN THE PAST, PASQUA’S WALLS WERE DECORATED WITH THOSE SUFFERING FROM DOWN’S SYNDROME; THE ANESTHETIZED. IN THE PAST, HIS TRANSEVESTITES AND OTHER SOCIAL OUTCASTS FLIRTED WITH HIS MORE SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE AND “HAPPY” SUBJECTS.

NOW, MEN WITH EYES DESTROYED REMIND US THAT TIRESIAS IS ALIVE AND WELL AND PREDICTING THE FUTURE. TIRESIAS, THE BLIND SIGHT-SEEER, WITH HIS INFINITE KNOWLEDGE OF MANKIND; PREDICTING THE FUTURE BUT NEVER CONDEMNING IT. THE FORMER, DISMEMBERED BODY HAS BEEN REPLACED BY A NEW BRUISED AND BATTERED BODY. THE FERRARI IS REPLACED BY ANOTHER MACHINE; THE REVVED UP COMBO OF MAN AND WHEELCHAIR.
Untitled • Mixed media on paper laid down on canvas • 200 x 150 cm • 78.7 x 59.1 in.
Untitled • Mixed media on paper laid down on canvas – 200 x 150 cm – 78.7 x 59.1 in.
Marble tattooed skull - Carrara white marble tattooed, unique piece - H: 60 cm - 23.6 in.
Untitled • Mixed media on paper laid down on canvas • 200 x 150 cm • 78.7 x 59.1 in.
Untitled • Mixed media on paper • 40 x 30 cm • 15.7 x 11.8 in.
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Untitled
Mixed media on paper • 40 x 30 cm • 15.7 x 11.8 in.
Untitled • Mixed media on paper laid down on canvas • 200 x 150 cm • 78.7 x 59.1 in.
Marble ashtray - Carrara white marble, unique piece - Ø 50 cm – 19.7 in.
Untitled  •  Mixed media on paper laid down on canvas  •  200 x 150 cm  •  78.7 x 59.1 in.
THE ELUSIVE PHILIPPE PASQUA

Throughout an extraordinary path, Philippe Pasqua has earned recognition as one of the most important artists of his generation. From the very beginning, his art impressed and knocked down the convictions of whoever ran alongside him – such as the famous art critic Pierre Restany.

Pasqua’s taste for monumental sized artworks is coupled with a fascination for the most vulnerable things in life: the humans’ bodies and faces. Sometimes, he paints them with stigmatising differences that he magnifies through his art: portraits of blind people, transsexuals, and even people with Down syndrome... Disabilities, differences, obscenely and the sacred are some of his favourite topics. Through them, every canvas is the result of a fight between what can be shown and tolerated and what is socially unacceptable or repressed.

Pasqua’s painting results in a physical shock portraying an explosive and sharp vision. The profusion and amplitude of the painter’s artistic gestures demands for monumental sized canvases. Pasqua starts his paintings by depicting what he could refer to as fetishes, or enigmatic figures that are reminiscent of voodoo. Then, little by little, he turns his eye to those who surround the figures; he penetrates into the deepest of their intimacy.

Beside the carnal work, Pasqua is well-known for his large drawings. In these, he makes the human face or the body into some halo, mist, smoke, line or even no more than a vibration. They are no longer flesh and living matter, but rather sketched outlines and delicate textures. One must also mention the “papenpaists”: works on paper that result from the combination of serigraphic techniques, printing and paint, on which the painter remakes his pieces until reaching satisfaction through, adding colours or redesigning parts.

Another major aspect of Philippe Pasqua’s work is his series of “vanitas”. The technique he uses evokes a silversmith from the Middle Age working on a reliquary as well as shaman performing a ritual: he covers human skulls with leaves of silver or gold. Sometimes he covers them with skin and gets them tattooed. Finally comes the complex and delicate process of ornamenting the skulls with naturalized butterflies, which either diffuse light and powder colours through their wings or get lost in the shadows of the skulls’ eye-sockets. At times, Pasqua pours thick paint on top of the whole thing to submerge it.

For a few years, the artist has been going to Carrara frequently in order to sculpt skulls weighing several tons and until reaching satisfaction through, adding colours or redesigning parts.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Maison des Arts, Beauvais, France
Salon des Grands et Jeunes d’aujourd’hui (Nowadays’ Great and Young Art Fair), Paris, France
Aides Association, Espace Cardin, Paris, France
Chaussures d’artistes (Artists’ shoes), Joan Miró Foundation, Barcelona, Spain
3 Visions de l’art contemporain français (Three visions on contemporary art), Galerie Martini, Hong Kong
80 artistes autour du Mondial (80 artists around the World Cup), Galérie Enrico Navarra, Paris, France (with Jeff Koons, Rotella, César, Matta, Clément, Nam June Paik among others)
Hygiène (Hygiene), Yvonamor Palix, Mexico City, Mexico (with Ulan, Ali Z, Cucher, Sandy Skoglund, Steve Miller)
Hygiène (Hygiene), Fondation La Source, La Guéroulde, France
Ahrenberg Collection: 50 ans d’histoire de l’art (50 years of Art History), Fine Art Museum, Mols, Belgium, organised by Erick Oge
Fêtes, fêtesmales (Fetishes, fetishism), Passage de Ritz, Paris, France, organised by Jean-Michel Ribettes
Naïf & Friends, Espace Via, Paris, France
Nanoue bleue (Nanoue surrounded), Passage de Ritz, Paris, France, organised by Jean-Michel Ribettes
Collages d’hier et d’aujourd’hui (Collages from yesterday and from today), Galerie Lucien Durand-Le Gallard, Paris, France
Face Off, Aeroplastics Damaquique, Galerie RX, Brussels, Belgium
Inauguration (Launch), Galerie RX, Paris, France
Beyond Paradise, Galerie RX, Paris, France
Artistes contemporains des galeries du 8e arrondissement (Contemporary artists from the galleries in Paris’ 8th arrondissement), Paris, France
Quintessence (Quintessence), Galerie RX, Paris, France
Audéla du corps (Beyond the body), Biennale d’Art Contemporain, Aix-en-Provence, France
AS, Place Saint-Sulpice, Paris, France, organised by Sophie Acts
Soutine and Modern Art, Cheim and Read Gallery, New York, USA
New Era, Galerie RX, Paris, France
C’est la vie! Vanités de Caravage et Damien Hirst (It’s the Vanities from Caravage to Damien Hirst), organised by Patrizia Nitti, Artistic Director for the Maillol Museum, Claudio Stirnati, General Director

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1990 Espace Confluences, Paris, France
Galerie Wio Meng et Partners, Paris, France
Château de Grouchy, Uzcy, France
Galerie Lucien Durand, Paris, France
La Machine à eau (The Water machine), Mona Center for Contemporary Art, Mona, Belgium
Trauma, Galerie Hengevoss-Duquep-Jansen, Hamburg, Germany
Les Minis de l’âme (Mirrors of the soul - Portraits 1989-2001), Palais Bréa wellbeing, Nîmes, France, organised with Erick Oge
Blue portrait, Galerie Hengevoss-Duquep-Jansen, Hamburg, Germany
Galerie Hengevoss-Duquep-Jansen, Hamburg, Germany
Lucilles, Galerie RX, Paris, France
Maison des Arts, Beauvais, France
Salon des Grands et Jeunes d’aujourd’hui (Nowadays’ Great and Young Art Fair), Paris, France
Aides Association, Espace Cardin, Paris, France
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Fêtes, fêtesmales (Fetishes, fetishism), Passage de Ritz, Paris, France, organised by Jean-Michel Ribettes
Naïf & Friends, Espace Via, Paris, France
Maitamorphoses (Matamorphoses), Galerie RX, Paris, France
Centre Culturel, Metz, France
Patrick Painter Gallery, Santa Monica, California, USA
Spilsy Gallery, New York, USA
Philippe Pasqua - Palais, Galerie RICARD Galerie Enrico Navarra, Paris, France
Philippe Pasqua, Stiftung Ahlers Pro Arts, Hannover, Germany, organised by Peter Lipski
Crâne (Skull), Artucoria, Paris, France
Crâne (Skull), Isola di San Servolo, Venice, Italy
Philippe Pasqua, Palimpsests, oeuvres sur paper (Papenpaists, works on paper), Galerie Laurent Strouk, Paris, France
Philippe Pasqua, Art Paris 2011, Grand Palais, Galerie Laurent Strouk, Paris, France
Philippe Pasqua, Palimpsests, œuvres sur paper (Papenpaists, works on paper), Galerie Lucien Durand, Paris, France
Philippe Pasqua, Peintures et desins (Paintings and drawings), Moscow, Russia

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