

SOPHEAP PICH

Sopheap Pich is widely considered to be Cambodia's most internationally prominent contemporary artist. Born in Battambang, Cambodia, in 1971, Pich moved with his family to the United States in 1984. After receiving his BFA (University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 1995) and MFA (The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1999), he returned to Cambodia in 2002, where he began working with local materials – bamboo, rattan, burlap from rice bags, beeswax and earth pigments gathered from around Cambodia – to make sculptures inspired by bodily organs, vegetal forms, and abstract geometric structures. Pich's childhood experiences during the genocidal conditions of late 1970s Cambodia had a lasting impact on his work, informing its themes of time, memory, and the body. His sculptures stand out for their subtlety and power, combining refinement of form with a visceral, emotive force.

Pich's recent exhibition, *Structures*, at Tyler Rollins Fine Art (October 29 - December 19, 2015) introduced two new series shown in New York for the first time: *Wall Structures*, imposing geometric compositions of raw bamboo and rattan, with complex grid patterns; and *Bare Reliefs*, more ethereal works in which thinner strands of bamboo and rattan create a rhythm of light and shadow, solid and void, accentuated by fire-darkened areas. Also for the first time, Pich incorporated a new material, stone found in local quarries – roughly carved or smoothly polished in the studio – which complements the organic materials. The exhibition included new biomorphic sculptures, an important component of his work that had not been shown here in the gallery since his 2011 *Morning Glory* exhibition. He continues to be inspired by organic structures, whether of flora (vines, flowers, seeds) or fauna (in this case, deer antlers). With these, he explored the fluidity of line and the free expansion of volume, all delimited by the basic forms of typical natural structures – themes that are also at the core of his geometric works.

Pich's work has been featured in numerous international museum exhibitions and biennials in Asia, Europe, Australia, and the United States. His works were recently on view in the group exhibitions: *For the Love of Things: Still Life*, at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY (2016); *Drawn from Nature*, at the Asia Society Texas Center, Houston, TX (2015); *The Art of Our Time: Masterpieces from the Guggenheim Collections*, at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (2015); and *Medium at Large*, at the Singapore Art Museum (2015). In 2013, Pich presented a highly acclaimed solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, entitled *Cambodian Rattan: The Sculptures of Sopheap Pich*. The museum's first solo show given to a contemporary Southeast Asian artist, the exhibition "can be regarded as a cameo retrospective, since its 10 works accurately reflect the range of the artist's motifs from 2005 to late 2012," according to *Art in America*. It included several large bio-morphic rattan sculptures which were featured in the artist's two previous solo exhibitions at Tyler Rollins Fine Art, *The Pulse Within* (2009) and *Morning Glory* (2011). Also featured were works from Pich's geometric series, *Wall Reliefs*, which were debuted in a room sized installation at Documenta (13) in Kassel, Germany (2012), and subsequently featured in *Reliefs*, his third exhibition at Tyler Rollins Fine Art (2013). While using the same locally sourced materials seen in his earlier, more free-flowing works, Pich's grid-based *Wall Reliefs* reflect the artist's increasing interest in abstraction and conceptualization. The works consist of bamboo grids covered with strips of burlap taken from used rice bags patched with old fabrics and colorful bits of plastic twine, with added layers of encaustic, often colored with mineral pigments and charcoal. Pich explains: "These grid works, reduced to their bare materials and shapes, represent for me a kind of distillation of emotion, of remembrance, of reflections on what has influenced me, or the places I have been."

In addition to Documenta, Pich has participated in the Moscow Biennale (2013); the Dojima River Biennial (2013); the Singapore Biennale (2011); the Asian Art Biennial (2011); the Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale (2009); and the Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (2009). Additional museum solo exhibitions include: *A Room*, Indianapolis Museum of Art (2014); *Collection+ Sopheap Pich*, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney, Australia (2013); *Sopheap Pich: Compound*, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, Washington (2012). Additional museum group shows include: *No Country: Contemporary Art For South and Southeast Asia*, Centre for Contemporary Art, Singapore (2014); *Invisible Cities*, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (2012–13); *Collecting Art of Asia*, Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts (2012); *Encounter: The Royal Academy in Asia*, Asia Institute of Contemporary Art, Lasalle College of the Arts, Singapore (2012); *Here/Not Here*, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (2011); *Classic Contemporary: Contemporary Southeast Asian Art from the Singapore Art Museum Collection* (2010).

Pich's work is included in such major collections as: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; M+, Museum for Visual Culture, Hong Kong; Singapore Art Museum; Queensland Art Gallery; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Seattle. Reviews and feature articles about Pich have appeared in such publications as *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *ArtNews*, *Art Newspaper*, *Asian Art News*, *Flash Art*, *New York Times*, *Orientalism*, *Wall Street Journal*. In 2014, *Art Asia Pacific* called Pich "the Southeast Asian artist to watch at the moment."