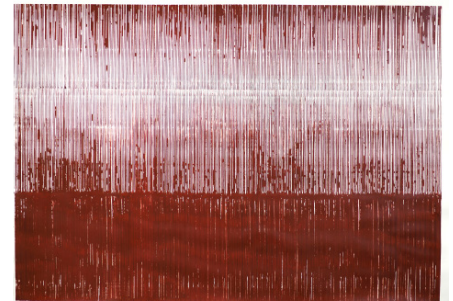


## SOPHEAP PICH

## EXPANSES

NOV. 1 – DEC. 21, 2018



*Expanses*, a solo exhibition of recent works by Sopheap Pich, features floor-standing sculptures and works on paper that embody a sense of lightness and expansiveness, which contrasts with their monumentality of form. The largest sculpture, *Ordeal* (2018), which had its debut earlier this year at Singapore's Asian Civilisations Museum, was inspired by the seed pods of the Ordeal tree (*Erythrophleum guineense*), which was imported to Southeast Asia from tropical Africa. Powder made from its bark can be used as medicine but is poisonous in high doses. In the past it was used as part of a "trial by ordeal" in which the accused was given a potion made by soaking the bark in water; if he died after drinking it, he was considered guilty, but if he survived, he was acquitted. With the open pod of *Ordeal*, Pich explores the fluidity of line and the free expansion of volume, all delimited by the basic forms of typical natural structures. These themes are also at the core of his more geometric works, such as *Monument 1 & 2*, which consist of large slabs of stone and wood, out of which delicate rattan coils emerge. *Monument 2* was included in Pich's installation of new works in the 2017 Venice Biennale's main exhibition, *Viva Arte Viva*, where it was exhibited alongside a series of print-like drawings created by dipping a stick of bamboo in a mixture of earth pigments and gum Arabic, then repeatedly pressing it on watercolor paper. For *Expanses*, Pich has created a new group of works on paper that continues the trajectory set out by the Venice drawings, developing greater complexities of composition and monumentality of scale. With the making of each work, the passage of time is recorded as the ink slowly fades from the sticks after repeated pressings. A subtle tension exists between the precise linearity of the impressions of the sticks and the irregularities caused by the natural texture of the bamboo, variations in the surface of the work table, and changes in pressure of the artist's hand.

Pich is widely considered to be Cambodia's most internationally prominent contemporary artist. Born in Battambang, Cambodia, in 1971, he 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, 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.

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 alongside works from Pich's *Wall Reliefs* series, which debuted in a room sized installation at Documenta (13) in 2012. While using the same locally sourced materials seen in his earlier, more free-flowing works, the grid-based *Wall Reliefs* reflect the artist's increasing interest in abstraction and conceptualization. Pich's works can be found in numerous museum collections around the world, including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Cleveland Museum of Art; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; M+, Hong Kong; Singapore Art Museum; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; and Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia.

Exhibition Dates: November 1 through December 21, 2018.

Gallery Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm.

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