

SOPHEAP PICH *THE WORLD OUTSIDE* March 7 - April 19, 2019



The World Outside, the second of a two-part exhibition of new works by Sopheap Pich, features seven floor-standing or wall-hanging sculptures, mainly organic in form. Constructed from strips of bamboo and rattan, Pich's primary media, they also make use of a diverse array of natural materials, including goat hide, stone, and antler, as well as naturally curved bamboo stalks. The title of the exhibition takes its inspiration from Louis MacNeice's poem "Snow," in which the narrator is transfixed by the contrast between a vase of pink roses placed in front of his window, and the snowy scene outside. Contemplating how these two opposing realities, the worlds inside and outside the house, are demarcated by a few windowpanes, he comes to the realization that "there is more than glass between the snow and the huge roses" – for they are separated by something much more complex and profound that gives us a hint of the mysterious complexities of the world. Each of the works in the exhibition in some way embodies this sense of a hidden mystery that is revealed through an intimate encounter with a physical object in the natural world. In each we feel that something concealed or overlooked has been exposed, often at an unfamiliar scale: biomorphic structures based on the human heart and circulatory system; obscure elements of the natural landscape, such as tiny seed pods and sinuous trails made by passing animals; or the rough bricks, each unique, that are typically covered over during building construction. The distinction between flora and fauna begins to blur, with an open heart resembling a fruitful vine, or a pair of seed pods becoming human lungs. The materials themselves embody this process, with goat hide often wrapping the rattan structures, like skin stretched over a skeleton. "All the works in the exhibition have different qualities of ambiguity, and one has to read into the materials and forms for clues to their meaning," Pich explains. "This exhibition can be thought of as a musician's album, with each 'song' or artwork standing for the various things I think about on a daily basis. But when they all come together, they have an emotional rhythm and narrative structure that shows a journey through the relationship between personal reflection and the external objects or events that we experience which are accepted by our mind but exist independently of it."

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.

Pich has exhibited at numerous museums and biennials around the world, including Documenta (2013) and the Venice Biennale (2017). In 2013, he 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 constituted what *Art in America* called "a cameo retrospective, since its 10 works accurately reflect the range of the artist's motifs from 2005 to late 2012." It included several large biomorphic rattan sculptures alongside works from Pich's grid-based *Wall Reliefs*, an ongoing series that reflects his 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; Singapore Art Museum; M+, Hong Kong; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; and Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia.