

INTERVIEW WITH ROSE MORANT

by Sayaka Toyama, director of SEIZAN Gallery New York

This interview was conducted via Zoom on March 7, 2021, as well as emails.



Photo courtesy of artist

Toyama: Were you always creative, and enjoyed making things as a child?

Morant: Yes, very much. My background as an artist was formed by the great influence from my grandmother, who was an artist at home. I grew up watching her make things with her hands, such as paintings, tapestry, embroidery.

I also like to collect things. Since I was a child, I have always collected stones, sea shells, small interesting objects from nature. Almost everyone does that at some point as a kid. But I didn't realize most people stop as they grow up. I still like picking things up when I take a walk in nature or on my trips. I have a huge collection of such pieces at home.

You are French-Swiss, born in Paris. How did your connection to Asia develop?

I visited Vietnam for the first time when I was twenty-four. I was working for a fashion designer in Paris at that time. As I heard about his wonderful journey through Vietnam, I decided I would go there myself, and follow my inner voice. This was my first real encounter with an Asian way of life. I was impressed and felt quite comfortable, like I was at home. Later, when my daughter was born, I moved to Vietnam with my family and that was the beginning of my long process of living a dual life between France and Asian countries.

First, I worked for French fashion brands such as Agnes b, APC, Hermes, designing and jewelry and home accessories with artisans in Vietnam. I worked especially closely with Hermes for over a decade and developed many collections of accessories with lacquer. I ended up taking over a family-owned lacquer workshop in

Vietnam. There were seven artisans when I started and it eventually grew to involve over 300 people, mostly artisans and their families. I also researched a variety of artisanal techniques and crafts in other Asian countries for Hermes. These opportunities allowed me to form strong skills and gain experience and knowledge in materials and know-how. I was then ready to take my next step and explore my own creative work.

In most of the works in this exhibition, you use "flower powder." Tell us about this material.

It's a special material I developed with a family in the Inlay Lake area in Burma. The family collects flowers that were once used as offerings to a local pagoda, they are then dried and mixed with lacquer.

When i was researching some crafts and techniques (or crafts and techniques) in Inlay Lake area, I encountered a family who did a small monk figurine made out of flower powder and lacquer. Later I started to work with them in order to create " Spheres " as sculptures and for POND installation in this show. Now I have a workshop set up there and the family is called "the planet family" by other villagers as they make many spheres for me.



Photo: Guillaume Zicarrelli

Tell us about the installation of POND, which consists spheres and plates made of the flower powder mixture.

This installation was inspired by a small garden near Imperial Palace in Tokyo. I stumbled upon the garden with a pond last time I visited the city and became fascinated by it.

The installation consists of four parts, representing each one of the four seasons. The idea is of a walk, meandering in memory, through time and different lights. It is easy to link our personal experiences, while looking at the same landscape, to each season. Each season has its own spirituality and invites us to meditate on the same landscape with a different eye.

Like Monet's series of Water Lily paintings, in which the artist painted a garden with water lily pond, throughout different seasons and in different environments- each season of Pond corresponds to different colors and tones changing with time passing.

Spring expresses rebirth, a spirited innocence coming out of winter, translated with the use of light pink and white stones placed on a rough flower powder finish.

The energy and luxuriance of Summer, and a feeling of synchronized energies, comes through the bright green color of jade. Spread out, opened spheres and plates mimic water lilies with blue and green water droplets on their pads. The spheres' texture is dry and matt, as if under the powdery summer light.

Autumn, with amber and brown agates along, and a black shiny sphere resembling a giant chestnut, evokes the secrets and treasures of nature's transformation as time goes by. The amber agates themselves speak of Memory as they are made of millions of years of old tree sap.

For Winter, I mainly used white alabaster and transparent crystals on top of lacquer plates; representing ice and snow drifting on water. I also used a rough sphere with broken glass gathered after a typhoon in Hong Kong, as well as moonstones.

To me, this installation illustrates the power behind a slow rhythm and the strength to redraw a new landscape. And a link to own our metamorphosis looking at the same landscape with new eyes.



Photo: Guillaume Zicarrelli