

DÉPAYSER

March 18 – April 18, 2018

Curated by Valérie Daval & Lacey Minot

As part of the International Month of Francophonie, the Alliance Française de Pasadena is pleased to present DÉPAYSER, a group exhibition featuring 17 artists who interpreted the French word "Dépayser" through drawing, painting, sculpture, photography and mixed media.

The French language consists of many words that cannot be translated neatly into English. "Dépayser" describes the fundamental experience of leaving your comfort zone: that which accompanies, for example, learning a new language or visiting a foreign country. Literally, the verb "dépayser" means to displace somebody, causing a change in scenery and routine, and by extension, disorientation and a feeling of strangeness. This upheaval is particularly manifest in art, as Marcel Proust explains in *Time Regained*: "*Our vanity, our passions, our spirit of imitation, our abstract intelligence, our habits have long been at work, and it is the task of art to undo this work of theirs, making us travel back in the direction from which we have come to the depths where what has really existed lies unknown within us.*"

Dépayser, a tangible, direct experience as embodied in the first sense of changing countries and of the memories thereof, has been played a role in the lives of many of our selected artists. With her experiences captured on the spot in her series "From Avignon to Paris", **Andree B. Carter** gives us a graphic, sensory vision of her voyage—witness born on the car ride between these two cities. With her series of sculptures created during her AIR (Artist in Residence) in Vallauris, also in France, **Shauna La** worked in the very midst of *dépaysement*. As for **Stephanie Sherwood**, she realized her series of paintings, "Transit", while completely immersed in an emotional turbulence catalyzed by her return to the U.S. after having spent 10 months in China, as if searching through her own flesh and fading memories in pursuit of reason. **Karen Jelly** also draws from recollections of a voyage in France, where, overwhelmed by the refugee crisis in Europe, she addresses the meaning of home through a painted series of isolated and dehumanized architectural structures, rails leading to nowhere as witnesses of our social violence.

For her part, **Julia Bui** treats interpersonal relationships with her series "Couch surfing." In this instance, the artist herself remains at home while welcoming strangers, at times foreigners, into her house and on to her couch. Her portraits are evidence of their own vulnerability and intransigence. Her approach has, without a doubt, shifted and enriched her relation to the world, to others and to herself as well. As for Franco-American artist, **Pascaline Doucin-Dahlke** embraces her two cultures in her series of digitally manipulated photographs. Her series "Nature" revisits the traditional idea of landscape across a spectrum of graphic and colorful emotions, approaching abstraction. This notion of abstraction is also found in "*Dépayser*", as sense of strangeness or disorientation. With her large, alluring and magnetic paintings from her series "The Ocean", artist **Melora Walters** explores a slightly colored and dark space, at once disquieting and beautiful. "Fear of Falling", the captivating painting by **Nathalie Tierce**, speaks to us of a shifting, uncomfortable space with decomposed and impossible architecture, where everything is tangled to the point of vertigo. And even if the strange is sometimes amusing, it maintains all the same its profoundness. With his iconographic drawings of matadors battling cacti **Jack Lewis** revisits and stages the dramatic, traditional, and questionable bullfighting art with talent, humor, and derision. Like Don Quixote fighting windmills, the combat is rich in symbolism. Humor is also endemic to naïve art: "Day and Night" by **James Scott**; the schematic painting, "Dépaysement Artistique" by **Connie Ching**; the truculent "The Quest" by **Jose Plasencia**; and the uncluttered art installation "Moon and Spotted Wave" by **Maxwell Coppola**, where the artist proposes a playful, graphic landscape recomposed in 3D space. We also find the idea of play in the floral patterns of **Marthe Aponte**. With her motifs pricked into white paper, the artist revives this rare, ancestral technique for our enjoyment. The artist **Susan Springer Anderson** wrestles with a fibrous, entangled material in her topographic monotypes, as if to capture the compact and textured essence of our complex interconnections. With the blacks and blues of his "Chemigrams", Charles Park plays and experiments with x-ray film, transforming the primary technical function of the internal view of a body into a fluid, luminous abstract movement. And it is the abstract gesture at the heart of the harmonious paintings of **Elana Kundell** that "*dépayse*" us. The artist invites us into the liminal space between emptiness and fullness, at once with balance and with strength.

*A special thank-you to **Marisel Tourani**, who has generously donated her photograph "Le Petit Prince" to the Alliance Française de Pasadena, currently on view and for sale.*