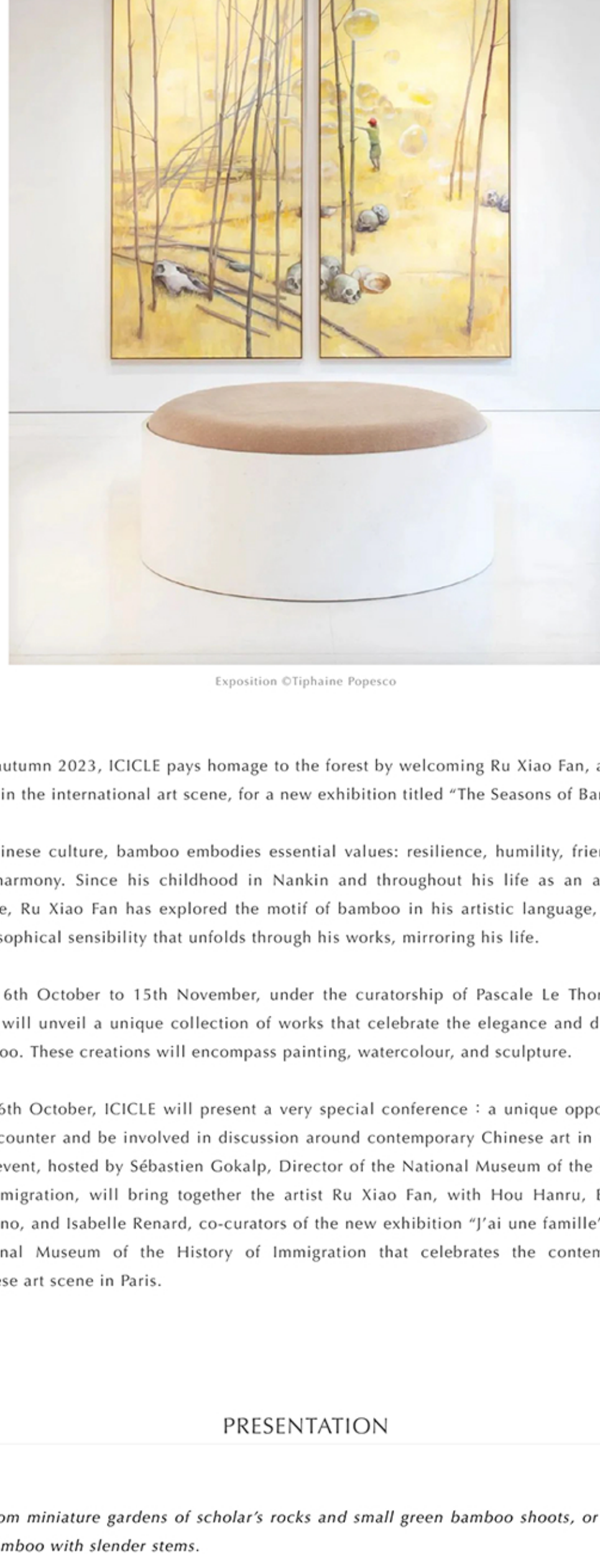


## THE SEASONS OF BAMBOO

Solo Exhibition by Ru Xiao Fan

from 6th October to 15th November, 2023

ICICLE Cultural Space, 35 avenue George V, Paris, France, 75008



Exposition ©Tiphaine Popesco

This autumn 2023, ICICLE pays homage to the forest by welcoming Ru Xiao Fan, a major artist in the international art scene, for a new exhibition titled "The Seasons of Bamboo".

In Chinese culture, bamboo embodies essential values: resilience, humility, friendship, and harmony. Since his childhood in Nankin and throughout his life as an artist in France, Ru Xiao Fan has explored the motif of bamboo in his artistic language, with a philosophical sensibility that unfolds through his works, mirroring his life.

From 6th October to 15th November, under the curatorship of Pascale Le Thorel, the artist will unveil a unique collection of works that celebrate the elegance and depth of bamboo. These creations will encompass painting, watercolour, and sculpture.

On 16th October, ICICLE will present a very special conference : a unique opportunity to encounter and be involved in discussion around contemporary Chinese art in France. This event, hosted by Sébastien Gokalp, Director of the National Museum of the History of Immigration, will bring together the artist Ru Xiao Fan, with Hou Hanru, Evlyne Jouanno, and Isabelle Renard, co-curators of the new exhibition "J'ai une famille" at the National Museum of the History of Immigration that celebrates the contemporary Chinese art scene in Paris.

## PRESENTATION

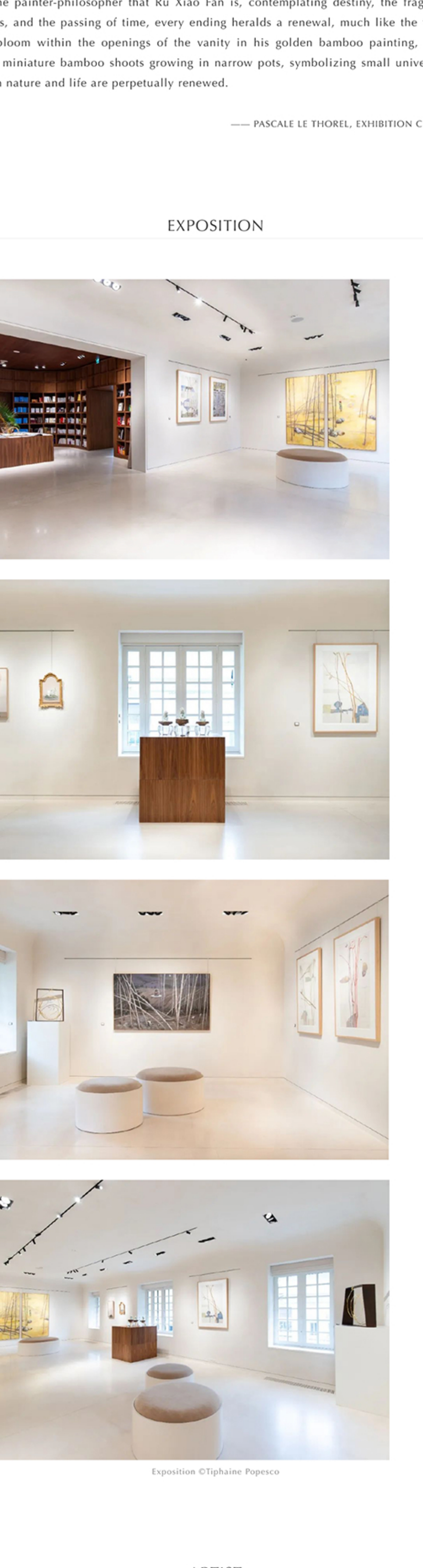
*From miniature gardens of scholar's rocks and small green bamboo shoots, or red bamboo with slender stems.*

*Gold-bathed landscapes or twilight.*

*Bamboo forests and bubbles from dreams populated by vanities, loners, or amorous monkeys.*

*Bamboo depicted in watercolours for each of the four seasons: spring, summer, autumn, winter.*

*A circle of golden bronze bamboo, open to the infinite, and a few Lohan figures seated on their crystal balls.*



Exposition ©Tiphaine Popesco

Such is the world of Ru Xiao Fan, whether in painting, watercolour, or sculpture.

After his arrival in France in the 1980s, Ru Xiao Fan, much like the writer Milan Kundera, with whom he shares reflections on exile and the embrace of a foreign culture, embarked on a journey of introspective and autobiographical creation. In the process of his painting, he states: "Compose the image like a theatre scene, as if I were both the painter and the witness of my work, akin to an invisible and hidden spirit."

During an initial phase, his period of acculturation in France, his art was a form of "physiotherapy," utilising absurd and poetic images "as metaphors for our suffering and helplessness." Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, which he has read and reread in Chinese, inspired the model for his work, constructed, much like Proust's, from the "fragmentation of consciousness."

In the 2010s, "Time Regained" became the informing text, as Ru Xiao Fan raised bamboo forests and gardens. In Chinese culture, bamboo (Zhu) has, since time immemorial, been one of the favoured themes of artists, poets, and philosophers, just as it pervades everyday life, from cooking to architecture and writing. Ru Xiao Fan reveals the simplicity and elegance of its lines, its resilience, its ability to reach straight towards the light, to encircle and protect through the strength of its eternal return. He also evokes its hidden, metaphysical, spiritual meaning, in accordance with the Confucian tradition of the "middle way." As the philosopher François Jullien writes, this is about "drawing inspiration from the bamboo's momentum and progressing in an infinitely spiralling motion, in harmony with nature and the world." Such is the case in the sculptures of the "Voie d'Or Golden Path" series. The porcelain Lohan figures from Jingdezhen, which levitated on their crystal balls in the rooms of the Guimet Museum in 2021, also speak of wisdom, extremes, and the path of regulation.

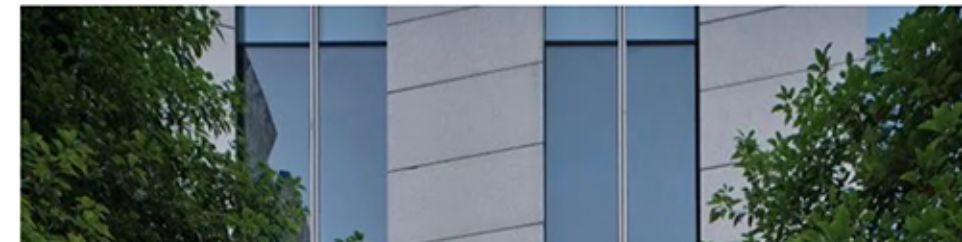
Ru Xiao Fan, a lover of literature and art history, references one of his favorite artists, Paolo Uccello, whose lances from the work 'Battles' reappear in his vast bamboo forests. The references range from Aesop to La Fontaine, as well as Wu Zhen, the Chinese landscape poet and painter, who all speak of the strength of the reed/bamboo which, though delicate, bends but does not break in the face of life's storms and winds.

Thus Wu Zhen: "The bamboo will stand the frost / Its shadows are thin and graceful under the moonlight / If you understand the principle of self-effacement / Then what questions will still weigh on your mind?"

For the painter-philosopher that Ru Xiao Fan is, contemplating destiny, the fragility of beings, and the passing of time, every ending heralds a renewal, much like the flowers that bloom within the openings of the vanity in his golden bamboo painting, or like these miniature bamboo shoots growing in narrow pots, symbolizing small universes in which nature and life are perpetually renewed.

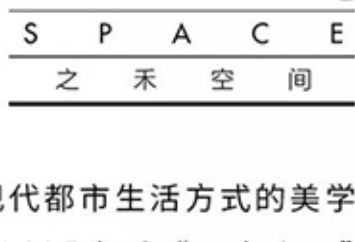
— PASCAL LE THOREL, EXHIBITION CURATOR

## EXHIBITION



Exposition ©Tiphaine Popesco

## ARTIST



Portrait of Ru Xiao Fan © Vladimir Vatsjev

Ru Xiao Fan was born in 1954 in Nanjing into a family of scholars who introduced him to calligraphy at an early age. He studied at the Nanjing Academy of Fine Arts (1977-1982) and then at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, graduating in 1986. He subsequently decided to settle in Paris, where he currently lives and works. Throughout his life, Ru Xiao Fan has created paintings, watercolours, and drawings, but he also expresses himself through sculpture, often presented as installations that correspond with his painted works.

Ru Xiao Fan was a laureate of Casa Velázquez in Madrid (1988 and 1990), and his works have been exhibited in France, notably at the Centre Pompidou in 1989, the Cernuschi Museum in 2011, and the Guimet Museum in 2020. In China, solo exhibitions dedicated to him were held at the Shanghai Museum of Fine Arts in 2005 as part of the France-China Year, and at the Rong Kun Fine Art Museum in Beijing in 2014. The Suzhou Museum held a major retrospective of his work in 2017 under the curatorship of Pascale Le Thorel and the high patronage of Chien Chung (Didi) Pei.

## EXHIBITION CURATOR



© Philippe Vermès

Pascale Le Thorel is an art critic and exhibition curator. Recently, she has curated retrospectives for Peter Klasen (Tri Postal, Lille, 2010), Jacques Monory, the exhibition *Fadia Ahmad, Photographies* (Beth Beyrouth, 2019), and *Libres Figurations années 1980* (Fonds Leclerc, Musée des Beaux-Arts, and Cité de la mode et de la dentelle, Calais, 2017-2021). She is the author of numerous exhibition catalogues as well as a biography of Picasso (Buchet Chastel), *Dictionnaires de l'art moderne et de l'art contemporain* (Larousse), *L'art contemporain par les femmes* (Larousse, 2022), and *50 Femmes photographes autour du monde* (Larousse, 2023). She is also an editor and has been directing the editions of Beaux-Arts de Paris since 2000. She is the serving President of the group of art publishers at the National Syndicate of Publishing and the Association for the Promotion of Fine Books.



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