# LOUIS BRUMMER

Can we define Louis Brummer as a landscape painter within the terms delineated by the Academy in 1648? Following in the footsteps of the painters of the 19th century, Brummer devises sensuous and mysterious landscapes that appear with a unique beauty, reminiscent of the pantheism of nature. Each of the artist's works reveals a fertile, imagined world, representing a wilfully indefinable location. His nocturnal landscapes, adorned with setting suns, contain no trace of human life to disturb the apparent calm; vegetal life however is ever-present and abundant, indicative of the fecundity of the earth. Water, too, is a constant and universal element within Brummer's compositions — oceans, rivers, streams, swamps and lagoons. However, still waters run deep, and the omnipresence of waters and moons is a reminder that here, we are in the domain of the unconscious, where anything is possible. Water brings the promise of dreams and an Elsewhere to be discovered, an invitation to a journey within. The near absence of all wildlife — save for a single heron, and a strange figure of a monster — gives the impression of a self-protecting, self-sustaining world, closed off from the outside; the various bodies of water are seemingly threatening to any form of human life. Colours of sulphur, ebony, and even blood, imbue the waters overflowing with hardy underwater life; occasionally they cleave, giving way to a rich bed of flowers — another recurring theme within Brummer's work.

Louis Brummer conceives of his landscapes as waking dreams. However, these dreams also contain elements that connect the viewer to a tangible reality. The tropical vegetation is a pretext for a rich artistic vocabulary — mangroves with their tortured, tangled roots, agaves, baobab and banana trees are set against an immense collection of leaves and flowers. The originality of his work is found in the details of his paintings: sea urchins perched atop flowers, the shape of a monster, seemingly from pre-historic times, swimming in a moon-lit lagoon, or great desert expanses split by waterways and wild flowers. There are other scenes, evoking traditional Japanese practices, constructed on flat tints, superposed in pure, cold colours. Inspiration drawn from the tradition of Japanese printing can be identified in the branches of cherry trees, in the flight of a heron, or among the beds of chrysanthemums. Perspective is flattened by the simple construction of

superposed layers of colour, yet scansion is produced by the radical juxtaposition of chromatic layers.

Worlds apart from so-called Naïve Art, Brummer's work inscribes itself resolutely within the field of contemporary landscape painting. The artist does not depict a lost paradise, or a golden age, but rather extracts an imagined, landscape from his mind, one that calls upon the beauty of forms intrinsic to nature.

The mystery of such scenes — maybe the foremost desire of the artist — offers the spectator a different way of looking at nature and at the landscapes that we no longer know how to contemplate. The smallest details draw in the eye, plunging the viewer into the composition, to discover a previously hidden world. An abandoned submarine among the mangroves denotes Brummer's desire to re-transcribe a world in which man no longer knows how to see; beauty extends to the most banal of objects, yet we are no longer able to recognise it. For Brummer, wonderment must be both immediate and profound. His paintings act as revelatory instances; he draws upon pictorial creation in order to transform the real. The boldness of the contrast between colours reactivates the painter's palette; the creator is demiurge and the spectator is gripped by his landscapes. The eye is determinedly and expertly drawn across the composition towards the details framing the edge of each work, guiding the eye towards a vanishing point where the waterways, mountains, the sun or the moon, which dominate the scene, converge. Painters generally employ this practice of incorporating such framing elements as a means of structuring their composition according to the principals of perspective and architectural organisation. Brummer aligns his compositions with the Albertian principle, and this, if nothing else, is testimony to his place as an artist within the classical tradition. His work is rigorously architectural, a structure onto which he is then able to introduce all manner of elements drawn from his imagination and memory, drawing too on the unconscious. His use of bright colours is reminiscent of the Nabis and the Fauves, resounding with expression more than with conventional reality. It is useful to evoke here Paul Gauguin's lesson to Paul Sérusier — the would-be founding father of the Nabis — as he painted *Le Talisman,* a seminal work of the movement. "How do you perceive this tree?" Asks Gauguin, "It is green. Then use green, the most beautiful green on your palette. And this

shadow? It is not blue? Then do not be afraid to paint it as blue as possible."[1] Such a boldness of colour characterises Brummer's work; emotion is translated through colour and the artist's personal perception seeps into reality. The way in which Brummer approaches his composition means that he employs a unique chromatic range, something that is now rare within contemporary figurative painting. Yet it must be made clear, Brummer is inheritor to no artistic movement, no school of painting; his world is one that he discovered through his travels, through his personal research, and experience.

We know little about Louis Brummer, and it's likely to stay that way. Born in 1956, the artist discovered art and painting by way of silhouette painter Ernst Moritz Engert (1892-1986). The two met shortly before Engert's death, bequeathing the young Brummer painting materials and an easel. The aspiring artist began painting before embarking on a short-lived career as a jockey, then abandoning the profession to travel across the Middle East. In Turkey and Iran most notably, Brummer acquired a new formal repertoire; the use of Levantine motifs characteristic of the region, and colours akin to those of Oriental rugs, became noticeable within his work. Upon his return to Europe, versed in a new artistic language, he began to integrate such elements into his painting. Around the 2000s, Brummer completed his training with a trip to Weißenseifen in the Eifel region of Rhineland where a community of sculptors had become established, initiated by Albrecht Klauer-Simonis (1918-2002), who was one of the first to move to the region following the war. It was here that Brummer learnt to work directly on a range of different stone, notably sandstone. He learnt to carve, an activity requiring considerable physical exertion, care and attention to detail; constraining the artist to humility and the precision of gesture in the face of the monolithic block that he must bring to life. Following this statuary education which concluded his training, Brummer returned to painting, now with a total mastery of his trade in both painting and sculpting. The artistic language that he went on to develop is wholly personal and echoes his unconventional path as a painter-traveller.

Translation — Jessica Saxby