

L'École des Filles at Huelgoat

It is no longer a school, it is not a museum and it is far more than a gallery... The art centre opened in 2009 by Françoise Livinec in Le Huelgoat, a little Breton village in the heart of the Monts d'Arrée, is a place where time stops; a place that summons the past and present under the tutelary figure of poet and sinologist Victor Segalen; a place where lovers of literature and painting come together every summer. On one side, we find a wild, mineral nature bathed by the murmuring waters of the Rivière d'Argent; on the other, silent works expressing the very essence of things. The École des Filles is "an unusual place with a really extraordinary atmosphere" to quote Maël Bellec, the curator of the Musée Cernuschi, who is familiar with the centre and one of its star artists, the Chinese painter Wei Ligang. In November 2014, the Paris museum bought one of the calligrapher's works in ink and acrylic on paper from the gallery owner: "Peacock", dating from 2013, when he was in residence in Le Huelgoat. For a month he confronted the elements, painting thirty-odd works inspired by the forest nearby (a

dense forest, where the light filtering through here and there becomes a golden glimmer under the calligrapher's brush), just as Lacombe and Sérusier came to Le Huelgoat in their time to seek a primitive inspiration. Wei Ligang transcends nature, reinterpreting and renewing China's artistic tradition. "His art has a strong affinity with the work of Zao Wou-ki and Chu Teh-chun," observes Maël Bellec. "He questions the core, the very structure of the calligraphy technique, and invents new characters." The work exhibited this year at the École des Filles, a large format combining black, white and

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École des Filles, 25, rue du Pully, 29690 Huelgoat.

From 14 September, every weekend from 11.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.

www.ecoledesfilles.org





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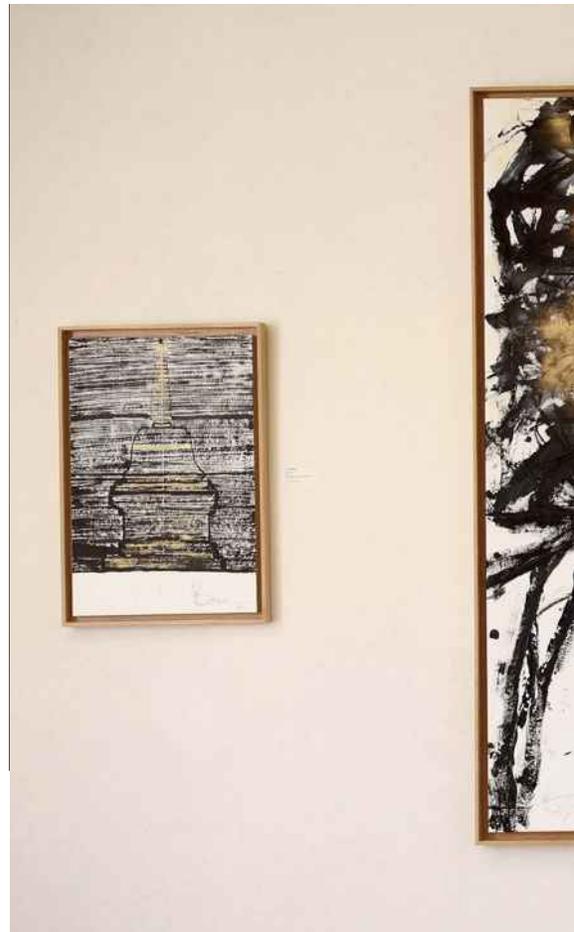
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École des Filles, Huelgoat,
Xavier Krebs room. DR



gold, belongs to this series dedicated to the forest. It carries the spark of the divine within it: the leitmotiv of the 2015 edition. Because after "Exote, esthétiques du divers" ('The 'Exote': Aesthetics of the Other) programmed last year, Françoise Livinec decided to "Briser le toit de la maison" (Break the Roof of the House), the title of the work by Mircéa Eliade, who focuses on the spiritual dimension of contemporary creation in its relationship with the sacred. The new selection is thus guided by "this subject, which reflects and condenses our questions, while remaining mysterious and open," to quote the gallery owner. Works find a natural place in the 2,000 m² of the converted school: both the large paintings by Loïc le Groumellec, Xavier Krebs, Won Sou-Yeol and Bang Hai-Ja, and the small formats by Matthieu Dorval, admirably laid out in the former shower room, a long corridor with red and white ceramic tiling. Inspired by Victor Hugo's text "Sub Umbra", his works are connected with the liquid element: the sea, a blueish vastness in which the artist immerses himself, making play with the sky and the rolling shapes of foam. "The storm has something terrible but fascinating about it. It is also sacred," says Françoise Livinec: "a way of controlling one's death, and containing it." She adds, "All these works have one thing in common: they show the fragility of life, in a silent aesthetic that sits well with Le Huelgoat, its natural surrounding and its landscapes. They all seek visual solutions to express this mystery." This is illustrated by the paintings of Xavier Krebs. A whole room is devoted to the Breton painter and ceramist, who died in 2013. There are several pieces from the "Three Gorges" series, inspired by the site upstream of the city of Chongqing in China. Here, Krebs, a remarkable colourist, followed in the footsteps of Gauguin, using luminous reds, yellows and ochres. Light, this time immaculate, again features in the paintings of the last series, "Lagoons", where the painter, now ill, set out on his final journey. Loïc le Groumellec's work takes the form of a procession – a Breton pilgrimage – through his temporary chapel made of wood and cloth, exhibited last year at the Musée de Vannes. It houses one of his canvases in the centre, now an *ex voto*. For thirty years, in an output avoiding all forms of narrative, le



Groumellec has explored the theme of megaliths, houses and crosses: motifs that emerge from the gradual obliteration of the black material. One of his compositions, incidentally, marks the entrance to the room dedicated to him. But this year, the gallery owner has focused on the painter's last series: two large monochromes from 2014 striated with signs from the tomb on the island of Gavrinis. The artist, for whom "painting is a spiritual act in itself", had a solo exhibition at the Paris gallery in late December: an occasion to



École des filles, Huelgoat,
Wei Ligang's paintings.

admire rare works from the Megaliths series. "The artist has extremely exacting standards, and produces little. There are only fifteen or so left from this series," says Françoise Livinec. Meanwhile, the Korean artist Bang Hai-Ja is one of the women selected by Françoise Livinec alongside Madeleine Grenier, Jeanne Coppel, Chrystèle Lerisse and Won Sou-Yeol. Belonging to the first generation of Korean abstract artists, Bang works the material, using both sides of the canvas to give it life, delicately combining

colours and making play with effects of transparency to capture the light. Her paintings are like windows opening onto the universe and all its beauty. For Pierre Cabane, author of the second monograph on the artist, Bang Hai Ja "has always sought to make light shine out of her works. And this quest for light, combined with reflection on the mystery of life and creation, has resulted in some magnificent paintings." At Le Huelgoat, the sacred is decidedly never very far away...

Stéphanie Perris-Delmas