

Galerie Lelong & Co.

NOVEMBER 10 - 13, 2022

GRAND PALAIS ÉPHÉMÈRE

CHAMP-DE-MARS

75007 PARIS

BOOTH E04

PARIS
PHOTO

Jean-Baptiste Huynh

FLOWER CHILDREN Solo Show



© Jean-Baptiste Huynh

The Galerie Lelong & Co. will present at Paris Photo 2022, at the Grand Palais Éphémère, a solo show of photographer Jean-Baptiste Huynh's latest series, *FLOWER CHILDREN*, shot among an ethnic group in the Omo Valley, Ethiopia in 2021.

The specificity of this original series lies in the encounter between the artist and these people with extraordinary ancestral practices: women dress as flowers or birds, children dress as stars, constellations, men decorate themselves with veins, hands or stripes. Jean-Baptiste Huynh lived in immersion for months with this ethnic group.

"In front of my eyes, every day, every hour, mysterious and fascinating metamorphoses are played out: an original paradise where there is no mirror, no self-image, no ego. The only reflection is the gaze of the other. The beauty offered in its innocent purity." The images made, portraits and body studies, large format collection prints made by the artist himself, are of an unprecedented pictorial intensity. They reveal a new chapter in his photographic journey and within his work, where the questions of self-image and the quest for beauty remain ever renewed.

On this occasion, the gallery will devote the

Jean-Baptiste Huynh

entire booth to this very specific work. Antonio and Hanna Damasio, internationally renowned neuroscientists, specialists in consciousness and emotions, collectors and with a deep knowledge

of Jean-Baptiste Huynh's body of work, will curate this solo show.

Galerie Lelong & Co. - Paris Photo 2022



JEAN-BAPTISTE HUYNH AND THE MAGIC OF THE OMO VALLEY

I.

Confronted with the most recent work of Jean-Baptiste Huynh, his admirers will encounter the refinement they have come to expect from this rigorous and complete artist — the classically lit images, the natural elegance of the compositions, the warm portrayal of humans, and the clarity and precision of details that can only come to photographers who, like Huynh, control the entirety of their work, including the printing. Still the new work also leads the viewers in a new direction. Instead of the timeless black and white images that predominate in Huynh's work, they will find the stunning and exuberant color portraits of the men and women who inhabit, today, the region of Ethiopia that encompasses the Omo Valley.

II.

Although the garments of Huynh's subjects consist of body paint, flowers, and occasional feathers, their portraits could not be more formal. These men and women look at the spectator confidently and even ceremoniously as if they were fully cognizant of their privileged status as denizens of a cradle of humanity. They seem unaware of their incongruent modernity but they act as if they know, proudly, that not far from where they are today, the skeleton of Lucy was discovered in 1974. The famous Lucy (*Australopithecus afarensis*) and her relatives had walked this earth 3.2 million years ago offering a preview of the humans that were yet to come. But why famous? Because their bones revealed one of the most riveting facts in biological evolution: Lucy walked on two legs and not on four! Lucy was bipedal and had made that momentous transition at a time in which her skull — and the brain inside of it — was of modest size, to say the least. This harbored a dramatic revelation. It indicated that walking on two legs came first and that the increase of brain power followed. Action and its consequences had promoted brain development. This is the opposite of what had been presumed until then, namely, that enhanced brain power had led to bipedalism.

III.

The Omo Valley was a perfect place for cultural developments, notably in the arts, and Jean-Baptiste Huynh's surprising new work provides a calm but powerful pointer to the historical facts. When painting appeared there, it was not on paper or canvas but on the naked human skin of the humans that lived in this region. They used pulverized minerals to paint the skin — yellow from kaoli, white from limestone, red and blue from ochre — and they also engraved their skin as well by scarification. The fundamental artistic methods of today — painting, drawing, and engraving were in place and the human body was, for quite some

time, the stage for their practice.

The body paintings that Huynh now documents with his keen eye served practical purposes. Given that enhancement of attractiveness is a timeless human pursuit, providing inventive makeup was quite convenient. But it is apparent that such decorations would also have been used to signify status within the community, and it is easy to imagine how they would have opened the way for expressing individuality.

There is reason to believe that body painting came first, which is surprising given the complexity of the process and the skill required for its practice. Huynh's *Nude*, as well as *Portraits*, illustrate the current results. The elaborate compositions using flowers and feathers followed later and are documented in many of Huynh's portraits. On occasion, both techniques were combined.

Looking at this festival of human expressions and of vitality, one's mind drifts to Shakespeare's enchanted wood in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Not unlike the actors in the Peter Brook staging of the play, the men and women of the Omo Valley recognized the master magician and brought their whimsy to the forest clearing. They performed their inventions for Huynh, in the manner of an offering to this singular artist who works alone and does his own lighting.

IV.

The contributions of Jean-Baptiste Huynh's photography to the world of contemporary art have long been obvious but his new work proves to be a departure. Quietly and methodically Huynh detects and highlights the features of a possible past and brings them into the now.

Antonio Damasio

David Dornsife Professor of Neuroscience, Psychology and Philosophy
Director, Brain and Creativity Institute

University of Southern California

Hanna Damasio

Dana Dornsife Professor of Neuroscience, Psychology and Neurology
Director, Dornsife Cognitive Neuroimaging Center

University of Southern California



FLOWER CHILDREN -

Portrait 30, 2021

Satin C-Print, Diasec satin

laminated on dibond

180 x 215 cm

Edition of 5

W24356



FLOWER CHILDREN - Nu 1, 2021

Satin C-Print, Diasec satin laminated on dibond

120 x 120 cm

Edition of 10

W24353



FLOWER CHILDREN - Portrait 4, 2021

Satin C-Print, Diasec satin laminated on dibond

120 x 120 cm

Edition of 10

W24357



FLOWER CHILDREN - Portrait 62, 2021

Satin C-Print, Diasec satin laminated on dibond

120 x 120 cm

Edition of 10

W24358



FLOWER CHILDREN - Portrait 46, 2021

Satin C-Print, Diasec satin laminated on dibond

120 x 120 cm

Edition of 10

W24359



FLOWER CHILDREN - Portrait 65, 2021

Satin C-Print, Diasec satin laminated on dibond

120 x 120 cm

Edition of 10

W24360



FLOWER CHILDREN - Portrait 67, 2021

Satin C-Print, Diasec satin laminated on dibond

120 x 120 cm

Edition of 10

W24362



FLOWER CHILDREN - Portrait 72, 2021

Satin C-Print, Diasec satin laminated on dibond

120 x 120 cm

Edition of 10

W24368



FLOWER CHILDREN - Nu 3, 2021, Satin C-Print, Diasec satin laminated on dibond, 45 x 45 cm, Edition of 12

W24353



FLOWER CHILDREN - Portrait 24, 2021, Satin C-Print, Diasec satin laminated on dibond, 45 x 45 cm, Edition of 12

W24363



FLOWER CHILDREN - Portrait 19, 2021, Satin C-Print, Diasec satin laminated on dibond, 45 x 45 cm, Edition of 12

W24364



FLOWER CHILDREN - Portrait 71, 2021, Satin C-Print, Diasec satin laminated on dibond, 45 x 45 cm, Edition of 12

W24365



FLOWER CHILDREN - Portrait 70, 2021, Satin C-Print, Diasec satin laminated on dibond, 45 x 45 cm, Edition of 12

W24366



FLOWER CHILDREN - Portrait 68, 2021, Satin C-Print, Diasec satin laminated on dibond, 45 x 45 cm, Edition of 12

W24367