

Solstice Haze

a solo exhibition featuring the works of

Tuan Vu

Opening September 23rd, 2023, 6PM to 8.30PM
On view until October 28th, 2023



Simard Bilodeau Contemporary is thrilled to announce the opening of *SOLSTICE HAZE*, Vietnamese-Canadian artist Tuan Vu's debut solo exhibition in the United States. Join us for the Artist Reception September 23rd 2023, from 6PM to 8.30PM. The exhibition is on view until October 28th, 2023.

"How strange that nature does not knock, and yet does not intrude!"

-Emily Dickinson

The wild beauty of the Vietnamese landscapes from Tuan Vu's childhood is unmistakable, and melts seamlessly into his thoughtful choice of warm, flushed colors. A tropical heat radiates from within, seeming to breathe off of the canvas; enriched and inspired by the palette of post-impressionist Pierre Bonnard (member of Les Nabis), the pigments layer into each other dynamically. Vu also enjoys a connection to the landscapes of Paul Gauguin, in their elegant simplicity. Scottish contemporary artist Peter Doig has an undeniable influence, more specifically his early works featuring palm trees. Now reimagined masterfully in Vu's glowing vistas.

Vu's unique engineering background lends a sense of deliberateness to his work, and the eye is cleverly drawn to many different places in his paintings, affording multiple spaces for contemplation and emotional connection. As he works, Vu frequently listens to classical music - Bach in particular, crediting it with drawing out his creativity in harmony with the logical side to his thought process. The balance of both trusting his intuition and utilizing purposeful design plans creates dynamic, intriguing pieces, beckoning us into a new but familiar world.

Solstice Haze draws us, in dreamlike succession, through a litany of ethereal scenes. The distant call of cicadas, the possessive heat of sunlight on the skin, and the subtle scent of lush flora; all are expertly evoked in the rich warmth of Vu's palette. Tapping into the memories of those post-impressionist painters that inspire him, Vu creates a sense of life and movement in each brushstroke. A story invariably springs up out of each painting, inviting one to explore their imagination as it wanders into the mysterious landscapes.

In the artist's body of work, the nymphs and satyrs depicted embracing and in various states of repose, were nature spirits in ancient Greek mythology. Often their genders are indiscernible in the paintings, blurring the ideas of sharp distinctions between masculine and feminine and instead regarding the figures simply as living beings. In each work we see the harmony of these bodies connecting with themselves and with each other, the natural ebb and flow of life. The tranquility of the figures, at peace with their natural surroundings instead of in conflict with them, is made apparent to the viewer through Vu's masterful employment of soft, shimmering light and layered color. The summer solstice in ancient Greece was considered the start of a new year; with the shifting sunlight we feel refreshed, renewed. The glimmering waters in many of the scenes, evocative of freedom and playfulness, offer yet another space for regeneration. Bathing figures enjoy the disappearance of boundaries between themselves and the elements, feeling at home in a world meant to nurture us.

Enjoyed in full, the series of work collected in *Solstice Haze* provides a much needed respite from chaos and contention, and reminds us of our inextricable bond with both nature and each other. The luminous hues linger about the viewer, enveloping us in serenity, and allowing us to carry the intrigue of each painting as we place ourselves within them.

Tuan Vu was born in Saigon, Vietnam, in 1971. At age 10, with his mom and younger brother they escaped to Canada by boat as refugees, while his older siblings were dispersed in other countries.

As far back as he can remember, he always created. In his 20's he graduated as an engineer, which is a career he pursued until recently. Meanwhile over the years, he nourished his passion and natural aptitude for art by attending drawing, painting, and photography workshops at the University of Montreal. It was during the pandemic in 2021 that he decided to fully dedicate himself to his passion; Art.

With skillful brushstrokes, Vu has a keen eye to capture the raw energy between the characters and nature he paints. The vivid imagery and striking colors in his paintings captures the essence of the scene with remarkable finesse. Even when he depicts a dramatic tableau, the artwork translates beauty, sensuality, and romanticism, as if it is a dream or a mirage. In his work, the influence of his homeland's tropical landscape and visual references are obvious. Tuan Vu continues to have inner conflicts between his Asian origins and his Western acculturation.

Since 2016, Vu has participated in several group exhibitions in Canada, including gallery representation. Vu received a Merit for his participation in the Luxembourg Art Prize (2021 and 2022). He was selected among the finalist artists for the 30th-anniversary edition of the London-based magazine ArtMaze (2022) and Friends of Artists (FOA). 2023 is a prosperous year for the artist. His work was chosen for group exhibitions in Montreal, Los Angeles, and Berlin by international galleries. In September, he will have his first solo exhibition outside of Canada with Simard Bilodeau Contemporary. In March 2024, he will have his first solo exhibition in London.