

Through painting, one French artist has discovered a window into Balinese life

Report **Katrin Figge**

Rhapsody For the Otherness

Born in a provincial village near Orleans in 1969, Bali-based French artist Jean-Philippe Haure never imagined that someday he would venture to a foreign country and wind up staying there for more than two decades.

But life takes unexpected turns, and Haure, whose paintings are currently exhibited at One East Artspace in Singapore, has put down roots in Bali.

In fact, he feels so much at home in the tropical paradise that he insisted on answering questions in Indonesian for this interview. "It is easier for me," Haure said, "Indonesian has been my everyday language for 20 years now."

As a teenager, Haure was admitted to the renowned Ecole Boule, an art school in Paris.

"At the age of 15, I began a new life in Paris, far away from my village," he recalled. "In Paris, I missed my home and my friends, but I received the education that I needed."

Upon graduating five years later, Haure decided to drop art and joined the monastery of St. Benoit sur Loire.

"In 1991, the head of the monastery decided that instead of military service, at that time still compulsory in France, I would be sent to Bali to help build a craft school in Gianyar," Haure said.

"After three years of working with the school, the principal was relocated to Cambodia and I decided to continue developing the school, turning it into a small version of the 'Ecole Boule'."

Simultaneously, Haure began to focus again on his own artistic oeuvre and quickly was invited to participate in art exhibitions, where he received positive responses.

His paintings, many of which depict the figures of Balinese women, radiate tranquility and a certain gentleness. Combining beauty and spirituality, they are simultaneously figuration and abstraction.



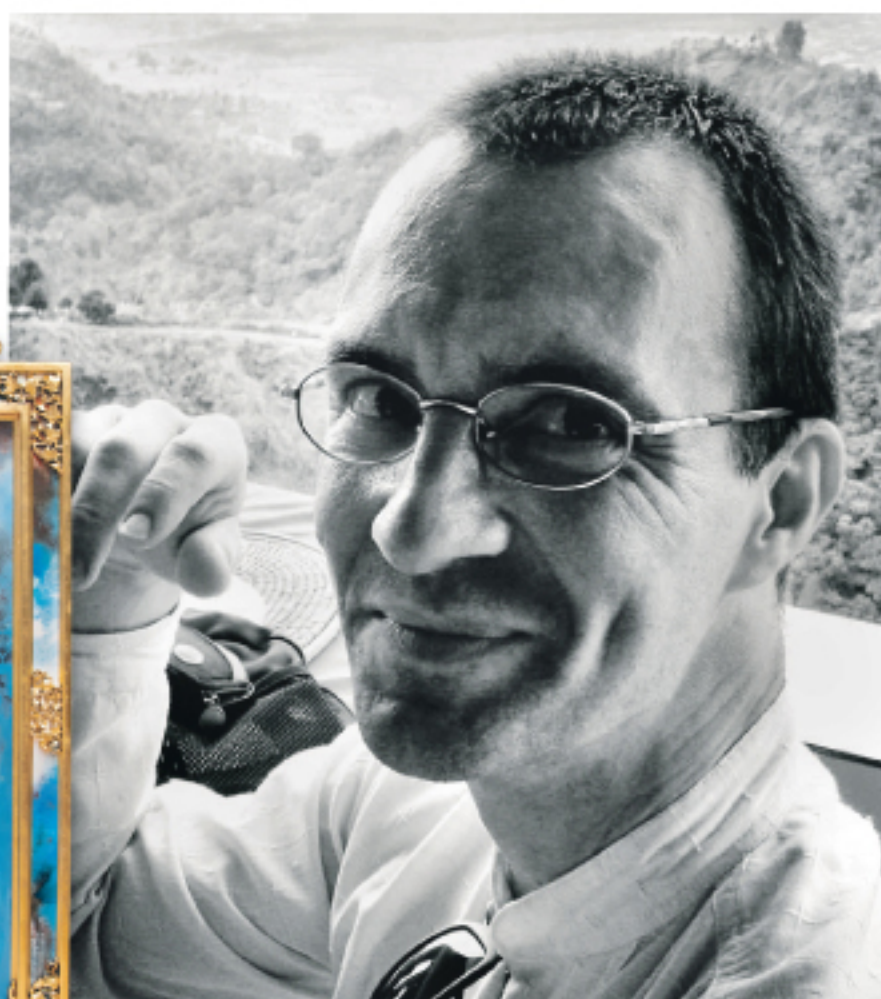
Rhapsody for The Otherness

A solo exhibition by Jean-Philippe Haure

Until Jan. 31

One East Art Space

30 Bideford Road, Thong Sia Building Singapore



In addition to painting the women of Bali, Jean-Philippe Haure, above, also makes his own frames. Photos courtesy of Jean-Philippe Haure

'I always want to find out who the person in front of me is'

Jean-Philippe Haure, Bali-based artist

"Here is an artist who is obviously not interested in formal considerations ... but by an endeavor, one should almost say an urge, to express what is to him the pristine and the pure, which he finds best embodied in Bali, and in the Balinese woman," French writer and art critic Jean Couteau, also based in Bali, writes in the exhibition's catalog.

This is "not because they are icons, but because both are to him the best available manifestation of this ideal, in their natural gestures and feminine simplicity."

If Haure "had been born in 15th century Italy," Couteau wrote, "he would probably have painted Madonnas and Tuscan landscapes, the ideals of painting of that time."

Haure said that, by painting actual human beings, he found it easier to adapt to Bali and his new surroundings. His art helped him understand the locals better.

"I always want to find out who the person in front of me is," he said.

That's why he decided to simply make the frames himself.

"Three years ago, I made a frame following a different idea and concept," Haure said, adding that the positive response by those who saw the frame in his studio convinced him to create a whole collection of paintings adorned by his own frames.

"For two and a half years, I worked on all the frames in the afternoon, while in the mornings I continued to paint as usual," he continued.

Haure's frames all feature floral patterns. Completing one frame, including the carving and gilding, can take up to one and a half months.

The time and effort invested in his paintings, the painstaking work on every detail of the frames, as well as the unique journey that took Haure to Bali, make the Frenchman stand out from other Western painters who indulge in the island's exoticism.

And that is, according to Couteau, one of his most important and enduring strengths.

Year of Art Marks Klimt's 150th Birthday in Austria

His paintings recall the heyday of Viennese cultural life when the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire bustled with the greatest artists and intellectuals of the day.

Now in 2012, Austria celebrates 150 years since the birth of Gustav Klimt, one of the best-known figures of the Jugendstil art period, who was born on July 14, 1862.

In honor of this milestone anniversary, Vienna's biggest museums, led by the Belvedere, the Albertina and the Leopold Museum, are proposing no fewer than nine exhibits during the year, all promising new insights into the artist's life.

"More works by Gustav Klimt will be on display in Vienna in 2012 than ever before: from his decoration work in the Burgtheater and the Kunsthistorisches Museum to his largely unknown drawings and world-renowned paintings like 'The Kiss,'" according to an advertisement from Vienna's tourism board.

Klimt, a co-founder of the turn-of-the-century Secession Movement, was the second of seven children born to a gold engraver in Baumgarten, near Vienna.

As an art student, he founded an artists' company with his brother Ernst and a friend, accepting commissions to decorate luxurious salons and create theater sets.

Klimt, however, is best-known for his later Golden Period paintings.

One of them, his 1907 "Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I," briefly became the most expensive painting ever sold when it changed hands in the United States in 2006 for \$135 million. The painting previously made headlines after the Austrian state refused to buy it from the family of its previous Jewish owner, who said it had been stolen by the Nazis.

To celebrate Klimt's 150th birthday, the Belvedere, home to the world's largest collection of Klimt paintings, including "The Kiss," has planned an extraordinary exhibit, which will include displaying its entire collection of Klimt paintings from June 15 until January 2013.

The Albertina will focus on Klimt's drawings, while the Leopold Museum is promising "Gustav Klimt – Up Close and Personal." The exhibit will focus on personal letters as it explores the private life of the artist, who died on Feb. 6, 1918, of a stroke.

Further exhibits are planned in four more museums, including the Wien Museum – the city's history museum – and the Kunsthistorisches, which will also offer special guided tours in the grand stairwell that Klimt worked on with his artists' company.

Moreover, his last workshop in a swanky Vienna district, now recreated, will open to the public in the middle of the year, the villa exterior having been entirely remodeled. **AFP**

Matchboxes with images of Austrian artist Gustav Klimt's painting "The Kiss" on sale at the souvenir shop at the Belvedere museum in Vienna. To commemorate the painter's 150th birthday, Austria is hosting numerous exhibits celebrating his work.

EPA Photo/Roland Schlager



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