

OUVERROÙ

ZÉLIE NGUYEN

Galerie by Lara Sedbon is pleased to present *Ouverroù*, the first solo exhibition by artist Zélie Nguyen.

Ouverroù. In French, this invented word sounds like a play on *ouverture* (opening) and *verrou* (lock). It captures the tension of something that hesitates, opens and closes all at once: a fitting title for the suspended landscapes in Zélie Nguyen's work.

Here unfold landscapes where still waters border gardens in bloom, grazed by animals from fairy tales. Elsewhere appear shelters, fountains, labyrinths and architectures summoned from the Italian Renaissance to ancestral Japan, passing through other eras and geographies. Havens for the eyes, these semi-enclosed refuges become passages to other dimensions.

Colors ignite or turn icy, the atmosphere plays with shadows — sometimes absent, sometimes displaced — freed from constraint. Perspectives — bird's-eye, linear, forced — answer to their own harmonies. Though Zélie Nguyen's painting may seem erudite and long considered, it is never premeditated. Composition, the presence of detail, and her notable mastery of palette all proceed from intuition. No sketches: the gesture is incisive and admits no repentance.

This tension between intuitive freedom and empirical construction appears in the dialogue of formats. White canvases and wooden panels become two sides of the same painted territory: the canvases open onto exterior or panoramic horizons, close to the "open world" universes of video games; the panels on wood, by contrast, tighten the experience, more secluded, like secret zones or halts along the way.

And when the human figure appears, it calls up founding narratives, myths. Not to explain, but to scatter a few clues: an autobiographical motif links with a universal archetype, inscribing the work within humanity's subterranean story — where images circulate, transform, return, and resurface as persistent afterimages under Zélie Nguyen's brush.

Anne-Laure Peressin, art critic