



Leo Orta | Xintong Gao
Une Simple Histoire

Curated by Domenico de Chirico

In an age marked by a swirling glut of ephemeral information and fleeting images, which often cloud our ability to discern and grasp the deeper meaning of things, “*Une simple histoire*” - devoid of frills - is proposed as an authentic act of cultural resistance, suspended in tone and poetically selenic. In a context so subjugated by a society that exalts speed, affective superficiality, capitalist insatiability, selfish vanities, and unbridled greed, rediscovering simplicity becomes not only a bold gesture but also a necessity: an invitation to rediscover the value of introspection and authenticity in their purest essence.

Based on such precepts, this two-person exhibition brings together the works of two young artists, contemporaries. Frenchman Leo Orta and Chinese Gao Xintong, whose work, while springing from distinct visual and conceptual universes, share a common tension, namely that of exploring reality and human existence not as static or easily defined entities, but as territories that are as arcane as they are fruitful, in a state of perpetual evolution. Here, the dialogue between matter and abstraction, between sculpture and painting, which emerges from their works, is not resolved into a simple contrast, but results in a prolific encounter between different visions, capable of mutually nourishing each other. Therefore, Orta and Gao do not merely play with shapes and colors, but probe, each in their way, the intrinsic nature of the elements, bringing out a stream of sensations and meanings that transcend the ordinary, exploring the inescapable balance between presence and absence, between visible and invisible. Each of their impetus or creative acts reflects an inner quest, in which simplicity is not necessarily synonymous with impersonality, but rather an attempt to trace back to that undisputed élan vital from which everything originated.

On the one hand, there is the sculptural manifestation of **Leo Orta**, who, through his vocation art, explores the notion of metamorphosis within an ever-changing biosphere. Aware of the urgency to protect biodiversity and respect the Earth, Orta expresses himself masterfully through a thoughtful choice of materials and the energy they give off, tracing the peculiar stages of hybridization processes between humans, animals, and plants.

Taking inspiration from the writings of German biologist and philosopher Andreas Weber - generally focused on the environmental crisis, man's relationship with nature, the need for an economy at the service of the planet and man, the role of science, and so on - Orta denounces this our society intoxicated by productive industries in favor of a necessary and now imperative reconciliation with the Earth. Through a sculptural practice that skillfully blends art and design, Leo Orta invites us to reflect on the interconnectedness of individual and community, exploring the social and psychological dimensions of human existence. What's more, inspired by the teachings of the existentialism of Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in particular by Heidegger's concept of “*being in the world*” (*Dasein*), Orta translates these ideas into his sculptures, generating tangible manifestations of the delicate interaction between the individual and the environment. His works, exploratory in nature, create concrete yet abstract worlds,

evoking deep feelings related to the body, memory, and transformation. Each sculpture becomes a space for reflection on man's vulnerability and incessant search for meaning, where forms intertwine and evolve, contract, and expand, soliciting an experience of the events more intimate, sensitive, and deeply emotional. Orta also draws inspiration from other sources, including psychoanalysis, intending to connect to the subconscious and the imaginary to express feelings more spontaneously through his works. He refers to the metaphors of Henry Moore, who defined his monumental art as *"an expression of the meaning of life and an exhortation to engage in life,"* and to the emotional and sophisticated manifestations of Niki de Saint Phalle. Recently, he has focused on the disturbing work of David Altmejd, appreciating his intuitive relationship with form and the state changes caused by materials, and exploring their expressive potential. In addition to all this, he is also fascinated by the world of industry and factories, from which he draws insights into understanding production cycles from creation to end use, exploring practices of recycling and reuse as alternatives to relentless destruction. Finally, he is inspired by the magnificence of nature, its organic aesthetic, the lush beauty of biodiversity that characterizes it, and its disappearance, which is as rapid as it is gradual and devastating. In light of all this, in an exacerbating climate that seems to threaten the very balance of life, and is increasingly unstable, his sculptures - almost stylized lunar presences - manifest themselves through dense and full-bodied, with chromatic variations ranging from the hues of a particularly thirsty earth to those of the sky, sometimes clear, sometimes-as in this case-crossed by boreal gleams. The result is a profound tension between permanence and dissolution, between erosion and renewal. Pushing beyond the sculptural gesture, Orta seeks a silent confrontation between the work and the viewer: an intimate encounter between two unknown presences, united by a moment of recognition of each other, not necessarily mediated by the material. In this transient cohabitation are intertwined contradictory emotional states of awe and welcome; thus, through these forms metamorphic, his practice is configured as a shifting relationship between permanence and survival, reflecting on the emotional and ecological entanglements that characterize our time.

On the other hand is **Gao Xintong**, a young emerging talent, whose research, deeply rooted in Taoist philosophy, investigates themes such as spirituality, contemplation, and the harmonious friction between movement and stillness, using painting as a tool to give form to the invisible. Shades of fluid colors, vibrant beams of light, antithetical energies, and indefinite forms - almost synographic - intertwine in his canvases, resulting in a painting that challenges the boundaries of the figurative and invites an immersive and novel experience, harmoniously oscillating between tradition and avant-garde. His works, which blend Italian Futurism and Eastern tradition with originality, investigate the balance between movement and stillness through the lens of Taoist philosophy, particularly the concept of qi and the duality of emptiness and fullness. All of his compositions, constructed with meticulous care through fluid lines and vibrant colors, recall his home culture and embody, precisely, the idea of qi: that vital energy, invisible but perceptible, that runs through nature and permeates the entire cosmos. Linked to the change and movement of the real world, qi manifests itself in every living being, giving rise to a visual flow that unites physical and spiritual dimensions. In his works, the relationship between full and empty becomes a dynamic engine, generating inner and recondite. The canvas is thus transformed into an encephalic landscape, characterized by fluid lines and colors vibrant, alternating between warm and cold tones. Each element takes on a symbolic and energetic form, giving rise to an abstraction that invites us to explore the dynamic flow and unconditional spiritual energy of nature. Evocative landscapes come to life in his work, where emptiness, a force silent and dynamic, allows elements to surface and come alive gradually. His pictorial approach often reflects a desire to capture the *"energy of the*

air” and explore the flow through a gesture that, while spontaneous, is always precise, measured, and never random. Also taking inspiration from the Taoist concept of Wu Wei - effortless action - and that of Yin and Yang, which in Chinese philosophy represents the harmony of opposites, Gao approaches painting as a gesture in eurythmic attunement with the natural flow of things. His works invite the viewer to overcome the dualism between subject and object, moving ever closer to the concept of the “*landscape of the soul*,” which becomes a central theme of his visual research. Specifically, the “*Cyberbamboo*” series represents, precisely, a bamboo forest in such a way that the viewer becomes part of it, an experience reminiscent of traditional Shan shui paintings. Similarly, the “*Untitled*” series of portraits restores the ‘landscape of the soul’ from scratch: a dynamic and sensory that invites the audience to look beyond the figurative, to explore the essence of the spirit through the pictorial gesture, to the sound of brush and ink, proper to the Shan shui tradition.

Une simple histoire takes the form of an all-round sensory journey that, through the dissimilar but complementary works of Leo Orta and Gao Xintong invites the viewer to confront universal and timeless themes - such as the body, the soul, and the environment, and its preservation - as well as with our tireless ability to transform and reinterpret the reality around us. Orta's sculptures and Gao's paintings thus create a dialogue between the material and the immaterial, the manifest and the intangible, the light and the dark, the sensitive and the inaccessible, the abundant and the deprivation, inviting a deep and constantly becoming a reflection on existence and the interconnection between the individual, nature, and society. Thus, the exhibition does not merely tell a *simple story* but invites the audience to immerse themselves in an articulated visual narrative, charged with emotions, meanings, symbols, and visions of our time, yet to be explored, interpreted, and perhaps even resolved.

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