

Thierry ESTHER 2008

www.galerie-esther.fr



Artiste soutenu par Mots de Pass' www.motsdepass.com



The desire to paint may surface at any time: while watching a movie (which is going to generate or bring back certain emotions), while walking through the streets of my neighborhood, or when seeing a face or an alley which suggests something special. When it happens, I cannot actually say it is a desire, it is rather like a need to paint. I have to start quickly so the feeling I want to replicate onto the canvas does not fade away. What really matters is the instant. I want to lay down images of the souls that touch me—or have touched me. To that end, with the use of paint, I project onto a face the effects it has upon me.

In spite of appearances, my goal is not to create an atmosphere that is depressing to the potential viewers. Although the origin of some paintings might be dark, their intended goal is not. I do like to tickle my characters in order to reveal their flaws; I distort their faces with hatred and their features with pain, but I make sure I always leave traces of hope, or even happiness.

I choose to use strong colors (those that bear heavy signification, such as red, black, or earth brown), but I enjoy hijacking their meanings and lead them away from their symbolic representations. Green at the bottom of a painting does not necessarily represent grass. Conversely, I do not need red to reproduce blood. All these symbols are fun to toy with.

Technically, I like to discover—therefore try—new ways of painting and preparing the canvas. For instance, I soak the honeycomb paper sheet in lukewarm water, beforehand. Or, before the oil paint has totally dried, I apply a coating of varnish, or I dip the canvas into cold water, then I continue to paint. Again, because I like to experiment, I sometimes mix the paint with Indian ink,

I also enjoy painting with a knife. This technique, when elaborating a portrait for instance, consists in applying uneven tinges onto the canvas. In the end, it looks like a sculpture—the face seems to have been carved into tinted wood. In addition to that, I also allow myself to use other methods, such as throwing paint to obtain a different aspect. In any case, I like to create relief because it brings the observer closer to the portraits, by making them palpable, therefore “alive”—the catchword in my works.

Masala & Métissage

His colors are like scents, and his lines slashes—tightened by too great a desire to love.

In this blend, there is no journey, no folklore, but there are intense encounters—poised and raw.

Therefore, when the bitter taste becomes too strong, the artist scribbles, paints, lies on the canvas and leaves us to our astonishment. Meanwhile, in a disarming burst of laughter, he leaves for a world of fantasy, filled with eternal adolescents, a couple of selfish angels, Peter Pan and the Little Prince—a modern world made of fashion, virtuality, lightness, mélanges and creativity.

Everything in his production is unbalanced, therefore in movement. When looking at a painting by Thierry Esther, one feels as if interpellated, yet unfulfilled. The artist has rid himself of his anguish, of an overpowering feeling of happiness, of a shadow of the past, or an excessively pressing feeling and he leaves an image which everyone of us makes his. And from that point, we go on with our own story.

Masala (*mixtures in Hindi*)

In Thierry Esther's work, as in that of any artist who is influenced by his times and emotions, one can recognize a chain of periods, characterized by different styles and series. However, they all overlap, go, come back and mingle. His various influences will not go unnoticed by the "dissection specialists" who feel the need to categorize everything. It must be said that he has not been trained in an academy. He is self-made, and his inspiration comes from his coup de Coeur and the objects of his love; hence his freedom of style and the freshness of his enthusiasm. The sea and the air are more his elements than the pavement is—elements where everything flows and dissolves. He personally pictures himself as an angel or a bird—an angel who is sometimes despaired, most often ironic but always amused and in love—in-between two beings. This ambiguity between pain and bliss is the sign of an eternal youth—which he touchingly preserves and which he restitutes in his painting with amazing vivacity. When looking at his work, the most "solemn" of us find themselves exposed just as Saint-Exupéry's pilot who has broken down and is certain to have a mission to accomplish, although he no longer knows how he should reply to the Little Prince's simple questions.

Métissage (*Blend*)

Mixed complexion, mixed culture. Thierry Esther is a reflection of our world—made of free electrons, hungry for love and pleasure. His optimistic and insatiable modernity makes us appreciate life as it is—pleasure and pain—without any sectarian reference to a thinking system or a civilization. As he had experienced painful separations, changes and disparities, during his youth, he learned to protect himself and to organize his life in isolation. He has different facets, numerous life experiences, and a personality which is both rich and self-contradictory. He seduces his audience and showcases himself with skill, but he never opens up totally. The fruit of his blending does not lead to standardization. On the contrary, in its own complexity, it reaches a form of universality that is well rooted in our time. Thierry Esther used to paint periodically, almost in secret. Today, he reveals himself, as if to fully come to terms with himself, and give away some of who he is.

« Sur l'écran noir de mes nuits blanches... »

(C. Nougaro)



(“On the black screen of my sleepless nights”, literally “On the black screen of my white nights”)

“Take care of your mum, sonny. She’s taking you in a big big plane which is going to land in another world in 13 hours.”

Then come the last images of Bourbon Island. The island of joy has become the island of disunion—sweet memory of a happy childhood.

When he wakes up in the small apartment, the child fails to understand.

He is on a wooden case, with a glass of milk and a rusk. Through the window, he can vaguely see the shape of the Tour Montparnasse.

His mum is crying. Thierry is eight, and he is in Paris.

In the image of his paintings, Thierry Esther’s entire existence seems to be lighted with encounters, cross-roads and mélanges—the main theme of his life.

Thierry Esther was born in a melting pot, Reunion Island, where he spent the first years of his life in a family of Indian origin. At age eight, he was forced to leave the island. In Paris, during the course of his schooling, his sensitivity naturally led him to take interest in the arts. He began to paint, and started training in a school of cabinet-making. Later, his curiosity guided him to register at the Conservatoire de Music Hall de Paris (Music Hall Conservatory of Paris). There, he was introduced to the performing arts: dance, drama & film. However, it was fine art that became gradually more indispensable to him. He learnt to master the art of photography and studied Arabic and Latin calligraphy.

In the early 90s, Thierry Esther had his first exhibition alongside other artists in the Centre Culturel Debussy (Debussy Cultural Center). Wishing to give more importance to his pictorial works, he decided to take classes at the Centre National des Arts Graphiques de Paris (National Center for Graphic Arts of Paris). Then he showcased in Bournemouth (Great Britain), Paris, Montreal, and the Canary Islands. At the same time, his experiences in photography bore fruits: fashion designer Malek solicited him to cover his 2004 fall/winter collection.

Professionally, Thierry worked in the communication field. He used his creativity to design websites, posters, advertisements and perform photo coverage. That occupation allowed him to travel on many occasions, and to be in contact with the fashion and press industries. After working in the Canary Islands for many years, he came back to France and founded his own agency : C.I.D. (Com’In Design).

The energy he dedicated to the creation of his company did not diminish his commitment to painting. His paintings got ever livelier, and his personal quest is still reaffirmed every day.

Thierry Esther has always been torn between superficial and essential, and between fashion, joie de vivre and the search for the ultimate encounter—the search for his Indian origin, a complicated love, the need for acknowledgement, within a terribly modern and atypical environment.

This duality is fertile and constantly evolving. It moves us because no one is actually black or white.

In the image of his surprising youth, his feelings, his desires and his colors do not fade away.

His creations are sharp and palpable!

Within him, the bustling relief of the day blends with the luminous blur of the night.

He says about himself: « Insolent are my nights and prudish are my days. »

Born in Reunion Island, in a family of Indian origin, Thierry Esther presents us with radiant paintings which make us travel and bear witness to his roots—mixed and warm, spicy and tinted with the colors of the Orient. He professes to admire Jackson Pollock for his inventiveness and his original approach to pictorial gesture. He glorifies this artist, who has managed to deviate from the beaten track, by reinventing the use of the brush and imposing that of dripping and pouring.

Although he says he greatly appreciates Pollock, Vlaminck and Van Gogh, among others, Thierry Esther wishes to flee from classifications—those would tend to oversimplify his painting. His creations enjoy the influence of a mixed heritage but he asserts their unity. He often leaves regular canvas aside, and selects supports of his own, such as thick cardboard prepared beforehand according to a personal—and secret—recipe.

His creed is to find his own way by upsetting preconceived ideas. He is an experimented self-taught artist who does not define himself as a cerebral painter, but as an instinctive artist—the first witness of a process of creation which originates from a distant place but comes into existence through him.

When he is asked to describe this, he replies in his usual good mood :

« Brushes, a few paint tubes, canvas... A stroke of charcoal... then a shape, a figure or a symbol comes to my mind and settles there. I don't think. I only let my dream and my imagination take over me, in order to let everything assemble, in the end, and to allow a portrait to be born—or a landscape, a still-life, etc. Every day, my paintings put on more colors, and I eventually come into possession, with great happiness, of the painting I had been bearing in me, during all that time. »

Artistic creation is perceived like childbirth—mixed sensation of pain and happiness—and the piece of art, which has a life of its own, goes past the artist in order to enjoy a new boom after it has been sold, and to expose itself to new stares, nourish new lives, and provoke new emotions.

Thierry Esther is also a wanderer. His peregrinations are a source of inspiration and his encounters have made the world a vast exhibition gallery.



HIS MAIN EXHIBITIONS

- MALAKOFF (FR). R.F.O. France Outre-mer
Private exhibition June to September 2008
- BOURGES (FR). Galerie Pictura
from February to March 2008
- LAS PALMAS de GRAN CANARIA. M. Juan Fraikin 2001
- MAISONS-ALFORT (FR). Théâtre Claude Debussy
exhibition, may 2008
- LONDON. Ms Ferrero Suzanne.
November 1996 personal exhibition
- BOURNEMOUTH (GB). Wimborne.
January 1995 personal exhibition
- PARIS 17^{ème} WAGON7.
M. Alain from February to June 1995
- MONTREAL. Ms Prieur Carol.
October 1995 personal exhibition

Projects : Paris fall 2008. Lille (European capital of culture in 2004) winter 2008-2009 Brussels winter 2008-2009. Selected for an exhibition at the Sénat (Jardin du Luxembourg in Paris) summer 2009.





Anne CAYRE : How long have you been painting ?

Thierry. ESTHER : I started drawing when I was 8, in the very plane that was tearing me away from my island. I did my first painting long after that—around the age of 16. I did not keep anything from that time. I destroyed everything.

A.C : Why ? Did you think these first works were embarrassing ?

T.E : Of course not. But they no longer corresponded to what I had become. I was so different, then... I exclusively painted angels. I was looking for some sort of truth. Destroying these paintings allowed me to turn over a new leaf, grow up and start writing a new paragraph in the story of my artistic life.

A.C : What originally stirred in you the desire to paint ?

T.E : I used to often go to Montmartre for a walk with my mum—to the famed Place du Tertre. I would contemplate the painters and observe their dexterity. Walking away from caricaturists and mass painter for tourists, I finally went to more authentic artists. Unfortunately, that passion and artistic fever seems to have deserted Montmartre.

A.C : Thierry, how would you define your own style? We can't seem to find existing analogies in your paintings.

T.E : I am not trying to develop any particular trait that would make viewers understand that a painting is from me. I refuse to be limited to a certain standard. It would be the same as wearing a label; and the next step could very well be a bar code. I have gone through many pictorial periods, with different styles. Some of my paintings are figurative. Others are abstract. Some others are unstructured.

A.C : Which painters do you have admiration for? Do you have any Masters?

T.E : No, I was not a student of the Beaux Arts and I have never had a Master but my sensitivity is always alert, leading me to search, meet, visit... Therefore I do have many influences, of course. My favorite painters are Vlaminck, Van Gogh, Pollock...

A.C : According to you, did your Reunion Island and Indian origins influence your art?

T.E : I tend to find in myself more Indian influences than of Reunion Island. In fact, I am still looking for my roots. I think that, in some paintings, my desire to know India is perceptible—an attraction to a mysterious country where I have never been, although it is where I am originally from.

A.C : You have travelled a lot. How did these trips influence your work?

T.E : Every country has a soul, which is clearly visible in its cities and gives a certain color to its inhabitants. That particular color sometimes settles on the canvas as an expression of the country's unique identity, which has touched me. Travelling has taught me a lot on diversity and what is fundamental.

A.C : Do you paint when you are away from home?

T.E : I have done so only once—Saint Laurent Lake, in Montreal. Otherwise, I only draw sketches on a white paper leaf, which I reproduce on canvas once I am back home.

A.C : Why did you choose to use oil paint?

T.E : I like the way oil paint runs on my fingers, the way its scent stimulates me from the very first stroke of the brush. I also like to work with an indelible substance. Still, I do not solely use oil paint. I also make use of original material, such as pheasant feathers—in “Coco Chanel.” I also use charcoal for some paintings. In “Le Journal d’Anne Franck,” I glued pieces of newspapers and silvery paper that represents daylight and freedom.

A.C : You do not use traditional supports. Can you tell us why?

T.E : To me, creating starts with the making of the support.

A.C : It seems that some colors are predominant in your works. How do you explain that?

T.E : They simply are the colors of my soul and they are part of the originality of my work. I feel alive because I am obsessed with death! Red and earth red are opposed to—or meet—black, but glossy is always preferred to matte. My paintings are colorful and not sad. Even the most monochromatic of them bear hope.

A.C : When you begin a painting, do you have any idea of where you are going?

T.E : No, usually, I do not have any specific idea. I am in a certain state of mind, with a certain feeling and a need to express myself. I simply stand in front of the canvas... then it comes by itself, as in a state of trance. This is not done without work and exhaustion. The meaning of the painting can even shift during the making of it.

However, an event or an encounter is often at the origin of a painting. For instance, whilst on a trip in London, I saw a child crying, near Victoria station. His mother was right next to him—silent. The child kept on crying until she suddenly slapped him. He stopped fussing, and he started to stare at the wall that was facing him. Later, staring at the canvas, I saw it all again—the slap, and the silence of the child. I decided to reproduce this scene—the crying child and the wall within him. It turned out to be a childhood auto-portrait—Incompris (Misunderstood)

A.C : What is the average time you spend on a painting?

T.E : There is no time, no hour, no second, when inspiration has decided to show its face. I can spend hours or even days without sleeping; just painting and experiencing this sensation that runs between the canvas, the paint and me. This sensation is hard to define. It is extremely sensual—the contact with the material, the life coming from the colors, the shapes that dance on the canvas, the sound of the brushes which mesmerizes the ears, and finally, the taste of exhilarating perfumes...