

# GALERIE MAÏA MULLER

## GASTON DAMAG

### LOVE ME TENDER

05.09.2019 – 05.10.19

Love me tender (Works 1 to 11) - 05.09.19 – 17.09.19

Love me sweet (Works 12 to 22) – 18.09.19 – 05.10.19



"I hear these songs ..."

"When I paint here in my studio, in my garden on Île Saint-Denis, the songs that accompany the rituals of my country come back to me. So I sing, I hum every time I paint." For Gaston Damag, the vibration of singing is a connecting thread, one that allows one to feel, connect and create. Born in 1964 in Banaue, Philippines, Gaston Damag is a man from the landscape of the Cordillera on Luzon Island, where rice paddies conjoin every curve of the high mountain, where men and nature are linked by the work of the former and the gifts of the latter, where animism is still present in thought and rituals. Singing, for the Ifugao, is an expression of the bonds woven between man and nourishing earth. It allows you to feel, to get your hands moving, to give thanks and to strive for unity. As a principle for social unity, it is music that wins each and all of us<sup>1</sup>.

Having arrived in France in 1984, Gaston Damag remained eighteen years without returning to the Philippines. From his dual training, that of the Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris and the Paris Cergy National Graduate School of Art, he made a living. The French sculptor Toni Grand – his teacher at the Beaux-Arts who became his friend – ordered him not to paint or draw while he, Toni, was alive. So Gaston Damag turned to a more conceptual art of sculpture and installation. During a visit to New York, he recognised images of his uncles among photographs from the Philippines exhibited at the American Museum of Natural History. A first shock in this process of reminiscences which increased following his return to his childhood village in 2002. His work follows this thread of being uprooted. The pieces become the receptacle of a memory that is both singular and ancestral. *Bululs*, the representations of rice deities sculpted in wood by the Ifugao, are subjected by the artist to multiple diversions wherein the ambiguity of intercultural exchanges are manifested.

Since the death of Toni Grand, Gaston Damag has returned to painting. "For me, painting is colour," he says. The paintings of Gaston Damag enchant with their chromatic touches. Action painting, it summons flesh and memory, matter and mind. The white of the original canvas is disposed of, quickly erased by loose gestures that trace vast, colourful fields. They arise from fluctuations where the movement of thought intersects with that of the body. The work is extracted from amnesia and proceeds by strata. The final motif emerges in the course of complex hermeneutics, that of a painted palimpsest. This pictorial language, acquired during a Western artistic training, has become stronger through acquaintances with the work of artists like Francisco de Goya, Henri Matisse, Gerhard Richter, Georg Baselitz or A.R. Penck. This artistic teaching, says Gaston Damag, removes his nostalgia. And yet, it is also the link to what remained distant, to that which he had to keep quiet. And more and more, the artist feeds an intimate dialogue with his double, the other self, inside. He questions him, torments him, cuts off his head, looks at him, avoids the mirror effect. The relationship with animism returns with age, he confides. We believe him willingly.

Constance de Monbrison and Sarah Ligner

1. Roustang F. (2003), *Il suffit d'un geste*, Paris, Odile Jacob, p.116

**Born in 1964 in Banaue Ifugao, Philippines. Works and lives in Paris, France**

**Few dates** – In preparation : Ateneo Art Gallery, Manila - 2018: *A rose for mum* (group show), Galerie Maïa Muller - 2017 : *Gaston Damag*, The Drawing Room, Manila ; *Gaston Damag + Yannick Demmerle*, Kunstverein Bitcherland, Artopie Artistic Creation Center, Meisenthal / *The Inverted Telescope*, The Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila - 2016 : *Post-mortem*, participation to Damien Deroubaix's exhibition, Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers, France / *Seconde Ligne*, Gallery Maïa Muller, Paris / *Jusqu'à ce que rien n'arrive*, Curator : Pierre Vialle, Maison des Arts de Malakoff, France - 2015 : *Où est Madame Pschitt*, Group Show, Gallery Maïa Muller, Paris, France - 2014 : *The Drawing Room*, Manila, Philippines / *Ifugao Red*, Vargas Museum, Manila, Philippines - 2013 : *Manila Vice*, International Museum of Modest Arts, Sète, France - 2012 : *Bastard of misrepresentation*, Gallery Topaz, New York, USA - 2010 : *Accrochage de Septembre*, MUDAM, Luxembourg - 2007 : *Damag, Ocampo, Deroubaix*, Magnet Gallery, Quezon City, Philippines - 2005 : *Miserable intentions*, Gaston Damag and Manuel Ocampo, Galerie Alimentation Générale d'Art Contemporain, Luxembourg - 2000 : *Paris pour escale*, Museum of Modern Art of Paris, France - 1999 : *La Naturaleza de la Cultura*, Gaston Damag with Manuel Ocampo, Andalusian Center of Contemporary Art, Seville, Spain.

Legend : *Fugitive* - Oil and acrylic on canvas – 53,4 x 36,4 inches - 2019