

The artwork is an abstract composition with a textured, layered appearance. It features a palette of muted blues, yellows, and greys. The forms are organic and somewhat chaotic, suggesting a landscape or a complex pattern. The overall effect is one of depth and visual complexity, consistent with the text's description of the artist's work.

# ARNAUD ROCHARD

## LA MER DES Histoires

EN

**27.04—15.06 2024**

### *La mer des Histoires*

Text by Henri Guette

The vegetation is lush, almost dissolving the picture. The impression of depth comes from the colored shadows. In vertical formats such as *La mer des Histoires*, Arnaud Rochard evokes the work of dominoté paper and its panoramas, the beginnings of wallpaper in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The landscape extends like a pattern, and therein lies the ambiguity of the artist's work. If you look closely, you can pick out the detail of a plant, as if taken from a botanical plate, next to the silhouette of a tree, a knight lost in a forest of vines. The juxtaposition and interplay of scales create a visual disorientation between genres. By employing techniques associated with multiples, such as linocut, which he twists into a complex superimposition of layers, the artist creates unique images. He literally exhausts the pattern and makes it his main subject, as in the wallpaper produced with the Antoinette Poisson brand, where the figure of a horseman is repeated to the saturation point. What are the images that remain after having dressed the walls, tapestries and minds for so many centuries? A knowledge of the history of the decorative arts that enables him to develop a pictorial approach that transcends this framework and stands on its own, with all its secrets and unseen aspects.

Whether Arnaud Rochard is exploring azulejos, the Spanish-Portuguese earthenware tiles that first appeared in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, or referring to tapestry, leaving the canvas free : he enjoys mixing temporalities. Eclectic, in the first sense of the word and according to Diderot's definition of free spirits, he combines in *Casa* the touch of oil with the frame of linocut to evoke the specificity of patchwork on canvas. Beyond the question of taste, to which the notion of eclecticism was reduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he introduces notions of filiation and heritage, of which the half-faded *Âge d'or* coats of arms are the most visible aspects. The transmission of a visual culture shows the interweaving of different temporalities and geographies.

Like *La Mer des histoires*, one of the most beautifully illustrated books of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Arnaud Rochard works with fragments that he assembles and compiles. In this chronicle of the late Middle Ages, different types of texts and narratives blend together, poetry and prose, history and fiction, to redraw a genealogy of the world, and the image itself participates in this undertaking, notably with a number of cartographies. The artist places himself in this same position, with variations of style and playing on existing narratives and their counter-narratives. With the reverse technique and non-finito of *Bataille arcade*, he displaces details of a battle scene, just as he might do with hunting scenes in another context. The idea of conquest or the stakes of power seem to become as futile as the battles in Italo Calvino's *The Nonexistent knight*. Arnaud Rochard likes to refer to authors of fairy tales and parables like Salman Rushdie; like them, he leads us to look elsewhere, and perhaps to sketch out other possibilities.





Arnaud Rochard, *La mer des Histoires*, linogravure et huile sur toile (détail), 120 x 160 cm, 2024