

## **GALERIE QUYNH**

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### **April**

by Quynh Pham

Constantly challenging his artmaking, Tran Van Thao moves comfortably between styles and work methods. Whether he employs traditional oils on canvas or incorporates real objects and collage into his work, Thao is able to create paintings that engage his viewers on an intuitive level. This is accomplished through a deep understanding of both composition and materials.

In Thao's earlier works such as *Afternoon Tea and Chillies* (1998) and *Origins Revisited* (2000), he incorporated seemingly recognizable motifs and markers that provided reference points for interpretation. For this latest series, he has eliminated decipherable forms and shapes. With so few visual clues, viewers are compelled to experience the work reflexively,

The paintings in *April* are some of Thao's most spare and direct work to date. The use of modest materials such as pencil and oil pastel, suggesting childlike innocence, belies the artist's sophisticated and controlled compositions. The work can essentially be divided into two groups: the painterly canvases with smooth, scumbled areas of color and the collage paintings with sections of canvas (often times folded) applied to the flat painting surface. While stylistically different, the series is united by a mood of optimism.

*April* reveals the artist's depth and maturity. While the works themselves do not literally reflect the title of the exhibition, they encapsulate the simple joys and renewed sense of life associated with spring. Through economy of line, marks and stains, these feelings are communicated in a pure and uncomplicated manner.

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