

# Invitation au Voyage

## MonZen's Oil Paintings

In MonZen Tzen's visual evocations of cities, colours are warm and joyful, while shapes inhabit the images, taking over the viewer's imagination. Geographical references intersect with nods to other works. Are the images telling us about each city or the unique qualities of their multilingual, multicultural creator?

We all know what a city is, but such a complex thing resists simple definition. Cities have existed for at least five millennia. Their great longevity was made possible by the endless transformations they have brought about over the centuries. They have constantly had to adapt to political, economic or cultural changes in the societies they helped to form. All great cities started out as villages or small towns. Those that grew most are the ones that successfully adapted to the shifts in the successive worlds they belonged to and kept innovating. They are inseparable from both their environment and the networks of cities that make frequent, often intense exchange possible.

During the first three millennia, cities struggled to live off the fruits of the surrounding countryside. Their growth was subject to seismic or climate disasters, or invading armies could wipe them off the face of the earth. Yet those cities invented social traditions that lasted centuries, organizing political and religious life, allocating work with greater specialisation than in villages, expanding local horizons with what traders brought back from their travels, and building monumental, lasting traces of their rulers' splendours as much as the works of their craftsmen and scholars. Fortresses and castle walls prove that all these cities lived in the insecurity of the old empires, at threat from

the wars their rulers could declare at any time. Most cities lost their autonomy as kingdoms, then states, won political power over them. These territorial alliances gave them relative security, as hardly any cities have vanished since the 15th century. But urban populations remained a minority. Despite accounting for barely one-fifth of the total population in even the most urbanized countries, city dwellers on every continent viewed themselves as an economic and cultural elite, imposing unequal relations and even inferior status on rural populations. Cities grew from the 19th century thanks to manufacturing, improving their inhabitants' living conditions over the long term from the 20th, then multiplying until they became the habitat for a majority of humans.

By the end of this century, three-quarters of humans will be living in cities. With 8 billion inhabitants, today's world counts around 60,000 urban areas with over 10,000 inhabitants. In every region there are a great number of small cities, several medium-size cities and a very few huge cities. In different regions of the world, around 50 megapolises with over 10 million inhabitants, some very close to one another, form half a dozen gigacities of tens of millions.

For three quarters of a century, these great cities have dominated the global economy through their financial centres and multinational corporations, on which international organizations struggle to impose regulations. As their economies have grown, these cities have adopted increasingly similar forms of organization, with urban planning and architectural models gradually homogenizing cityscapes and urban lifestyles. According to UN-Habitat, cities everywhere offer a better human development index than their national averages,

although most are home to great wealth inequality between individuals.

What future can we predict for these cities? Many causes for concern stem from the very momentum that powered their growth. By extending their networks across the planet, cities have overused raw material and energy resources. They have become great greenhouse gas emitters and waste generators and, as many are on or near a coastline, are at threat from rising sea levels. Climate change is driven by the urban growth that inadequate or cynical economic models have led down an unsustainable path. The same economic and political models have widened inequalities between rich and poor, between well-integrated urban populations and those on the fringes of society. While tourism has become a new development driver, cities have lost part of the originality that makes them attractive, as their services, businesses and landscapes become indistinguishable. Are cities digging their own grave?

MonZen Tzen's work gives us cause for optimism. The great urban success story can continue if we wisely use all the networks they have built, on one hand by cascading down technological and organizational innovations through national and international regulations and, on the other, irrigating every city from the bottom up with the countless local inventions that improve living conditions, environmental restraint and quality of community living.

Involving everyone is this hitherto uncoordinated enterprise of self-organizing territorial intelligence means hearing and seeing what artists can offer our imagination, adding magic to our lives as we plan for our cities' future. MonZen Tzen doesn't depict roaring

skyscrapers or Vieira da Silva-style mazes. His approach is less abstract and closer to expressionism, more Chagall than Egon Schiele etc.

MonZen's London, New York, Amsterdam and many other wonders echo our memories and feelings in these paintings that are never sad, always in motion, bringing out the mystery and joy of each city. The steep alleys of Santorini, the people and buildings heaped into the old town, still enclosed in its green countryside, the perspective of a shore at Honfleur sending us to Ipanema, a Tiber snaking between two Romes, a firework display of nocturnal colours. In the images created by MonZen Tzen, you'll find so many other sources of the joy that these beautiful depictions of cities can inspire in all of us.

**Denise Pumain, Paris France**

Extract From MonZen' 2023 Book of the Eternally Wild,  
Chapter Invitation au Voyage

**Denise Pumain,**

Decorated as Commander of the Legion  
of Honour in 2023

Won the Vautrin Lud International Prize in 2010

Former Director at the European Research  
Spatial Simulation for Social Sciences

Member of the Academia Europaea, Corresponding

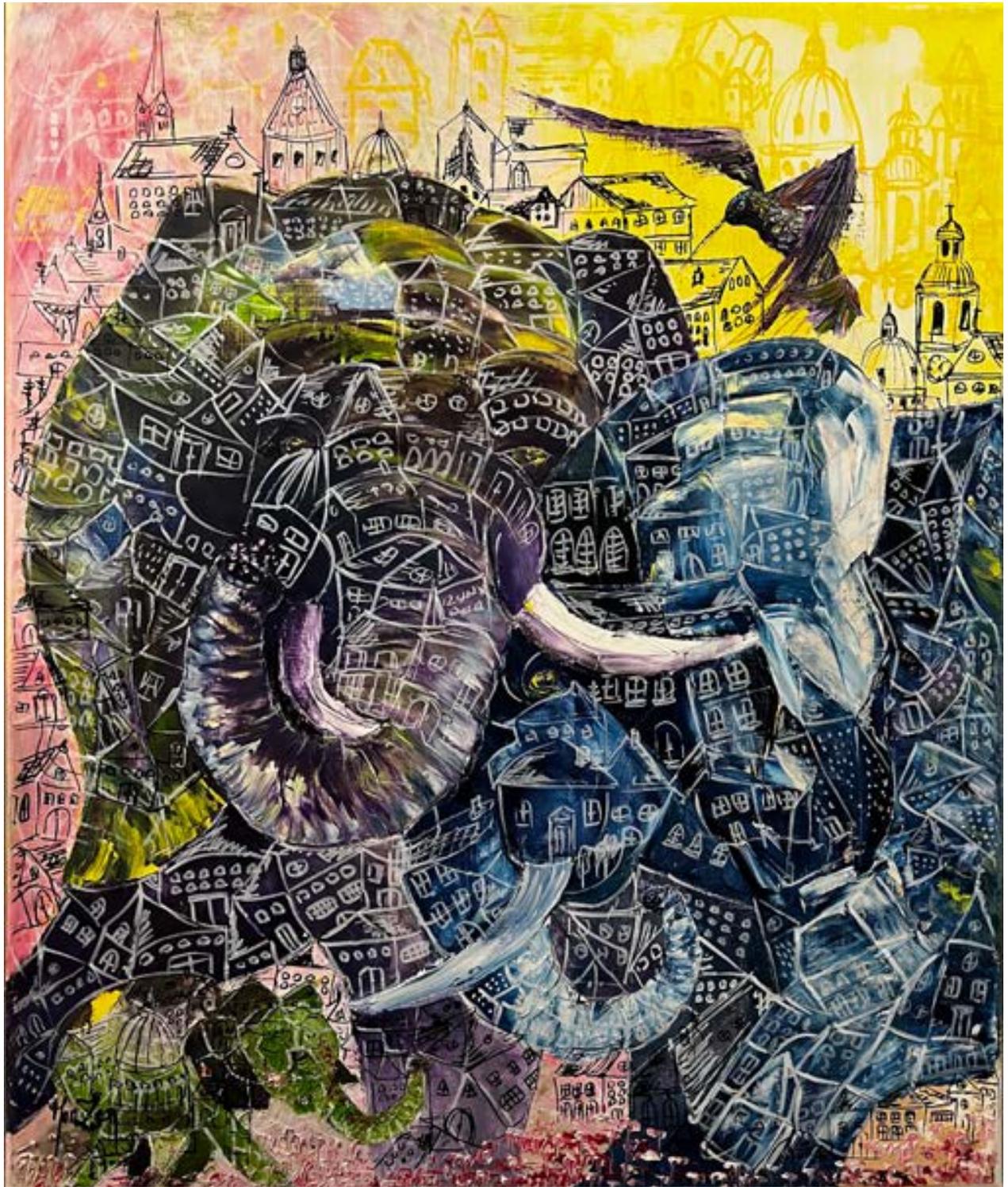
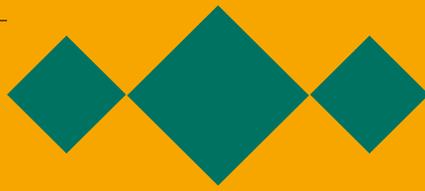
Member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and  
of the British Academy



An afternoon at Honfleur, Normandie



Paris, the city of Lights



Invitation au Voyage, City of Joy



Dance in the Big Blue Pacific



London Queen Elizabeth Marathon



Lady Liberty, New York City



Washington DC Cherry Blossom

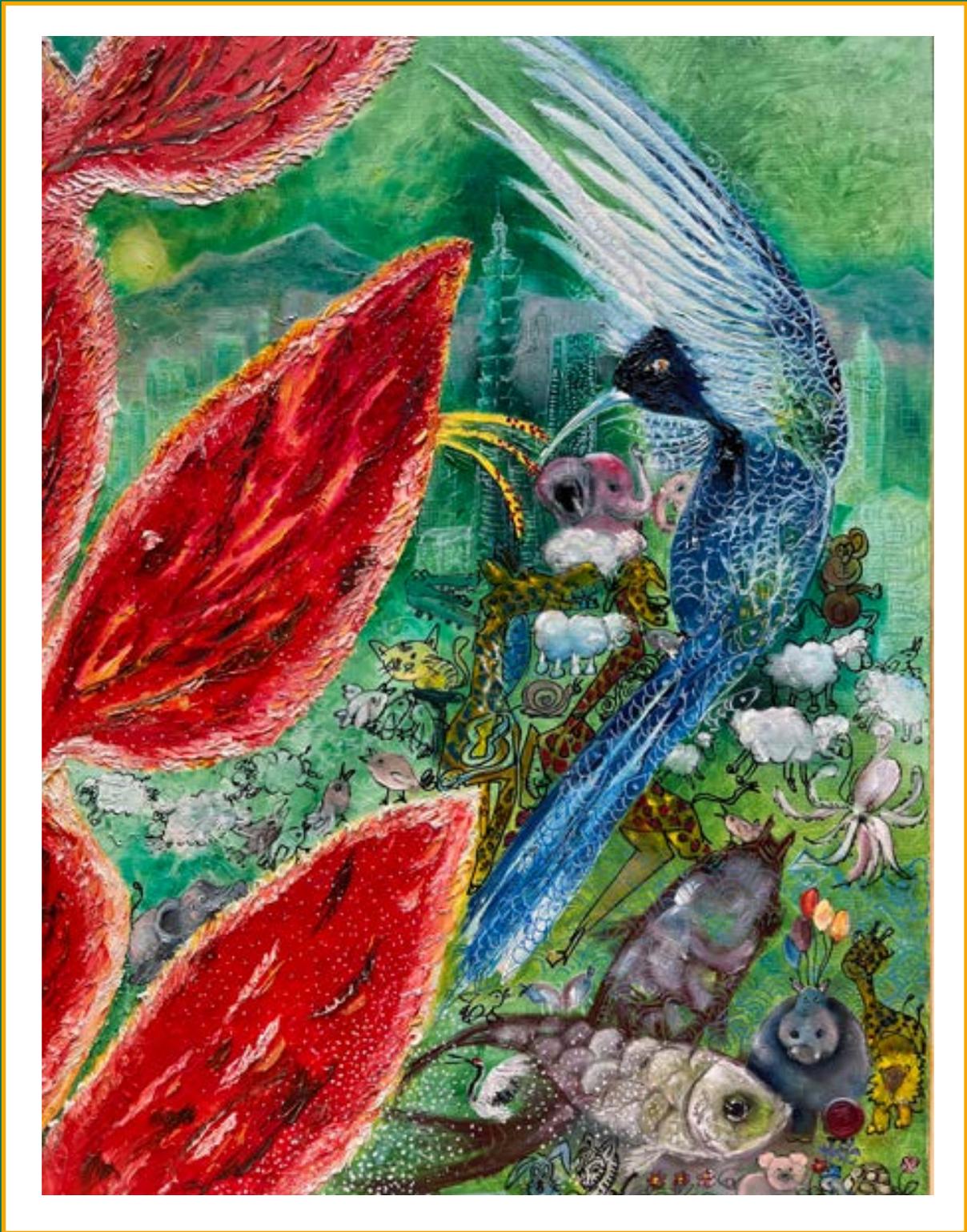




Maze Santorini



Sleepless in Seattle



Formosa Taipei



Fuji San, The Awakening of Silence



Roma, City of Angels

### MonZen' 2023 CURRENT & FUTURS EXHIBITIONS

**2022-2023 Del Ray Local Artisan Showcase** (Dance with Me & La Vie est Belle)

From Nov 21st 2022 – Nov 11th 2023 at the VCA Alexandria Animal Hospital, Washington DC Metropolitan, USA

**The GWW Exhibit Celebration** (Promenade with Mily Rose)

From May 1st 2023 – Sept 9th 2023 at the VCA Alexandria Animal Hospital, Washington DC Metropolitan, USA

**2023 International Gamma Young Artist Competition Art Exhibition**

From July 20th – July 23rd 2023, at the Global Marketing Conference, Lotte Hotel Seoul, South Korea  
Co-Hosts by American Marketing Association, European Marketing Academy, Australian & New Zealand Marketing Academy, Japan Society of Marketing and Distribution & Korean Scholars of Marketing

**MonZen' Eternally Wild International Art Exhibition**

From Oct 20th – Nov 2d 2023, at the National Chiang Kai Shek Memorial Hall, Gallery 2, Taipei, Taiwan  
In collaboration with Winston TING Mixing Identity