

Valentina DuBasky: Mongolian Horses and Siberian Tigers New Paintings on Paper and Canvas



Valentina DuBasky, Crouching Tiger, 2008,
30.5 x 32 inches, oil on paper

Cheryl Pelavin Fine Arts is proud to announce an exhibition of new paintings by Valentina DuBasky. The new series of "cave-wall" paintings, Mongolian Horses and Siberian Tigers, is inspired by recent travels from the Amur River basin that forms a natural border between Manchuria, Inner Mongolia and the Russian Far East to the mountain highlands and forest monasteries between Burma and Thailand. DuBasky's paintings of horses, bison and stags began twenty years ago with travels to research cave-wall and ancient art along the Silk Route. Her animals appear within a thickly painted "strata" of oil paint and wax and have been compared to the mythic cave paintings of Lascaux and Altamira. With her introduction to modern day Mongolians the artist was able to also connect to a culture that has a living and vibrant connection to its ancestral roots. Her travels are often in conjunction with ecological, historical or cultural missions, and her adventures bring her into close contact with the people and their lives.

She has written about these new pieces; "Ancient Mongolians worshiped "the clear blue sky," and in Mongolian and Chinese myth, horses appear as symbols of power, elegance and action. My paintings are inspired by field drawings made of Mongolian horses against the open sky of the steppe-mountain and steppe deserts. The surfaces of the paintings are incised with pictographic, calligraphic and totemic marks of pagodas, lamaseries, stupas and human figures. Similar marks appear on the flanks of the horses.

I created my first drawings of tigers at a Buddhist forest monastery and tiger sanctuary in Southeast Asia where I sat with the tigers. In Buddhist imagery, tigers appear as symbols of the forces of nature and the human spirit that were to be mastered by spiritual insight. While a fearsome predator, tigers appear in Chinese art as a protec-

tors against evil influences. In ancient Chinese myth there are five tigers that hold the balance of cosmic forces in place and prevent chaos from collapsing into the universe. For myself, the tiger, like painting itself, is both a tantric energy and a physical presence.

The sighting of animals in their habitats is becoming increasingly rare, yet their presence evokes a compelling connection between ancient and contemporary sensibilities. If we find wild animals and ancient cultures astonishing, it is because we recognize something of ourselves in their form and energy, expressed as much as the potential to transform our lives as to be transformed by that which we meet in nature. The mystery of my encounters at the boundaries of experience and place provide new possibilities for discovery-- and personal excavations-- through art."

The exhibition will have at least one painting of a White Tiger and the artist tells us that in China the White Tiger is the protector of the western quadrant of the cosmos. Further, the tiger is associated with Tsai Shen Yeh, the Chinese God of Wealth, and this god is usually seen sitting on a tiger in Asian art. Perhaps a good omen for our own "interesting times"! These paintings bring together decades of observation, skill and personal expression and have an energy that is evocative on all levels.

Valentina DuBasky's paintings and prints have been included in over 130 exhibitions nationally and internationally. She is represented in numerous public collections including: the Orlando Museum, the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, the Newark Museum, the Seattle Art Museum, Herbert F. Johnson Museum at Cornell University, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Fuzhou International Center and Xianghai Museum in China as well as in private collections in Europe, Asia and the Mideast.

Her work has been reviewed in Artforum, Art in America, Artnews, the New York Times, and the New Yorker among others. Recently she was featured on WETA Public Television. She has been the recipient of grants from the Pollock Krasner Foundation and the Ariana Foundation.

In 2007 and 2008, she traveled with the International Crane Foundation to Xianghai Nature Reserve in northeastern China, Manchuria and to Muriavovka Nature Park in eastern Russia where she observed migrating cranes and worked on drawings for her paintings. She visited Inner Mongolia where she made studies of Mongolian horses for her current work.

In 2006-7, Valentina was an artist in residence at the Pang Mapha Highland Archaeology site in Northwestern Thailand near the Burma While there, she visited the oldest archaeological sites in Thailand and made paintings in response to the mountain top and underground archaeological sites. She also visited Tiger Temple in western Thailand, a tiger conservation project initiated by Buddhist monks at a forest temple.

DuBasky is the Founder and Executive Director of Art in a Box, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that assists children and communities who are facing crisis situations due to war, public health emergencies or natural disasters through art and art education. Art in a Box has worked in Cambodia, China, Thailand, Guatemala, the Marshall Islands and Russia.