



## The imaginary worlds of Mongolian artist GAMA – in pictures

**A well-travelled Mongolian artist conjures up fantastical canvases that connect the physical and spiritual worlds.**

Combining European influences with humour and Oriental spirituality, GAMA creates magic with theatrical colours and a potent imagination.



GAMA, 'Manöver (Maneuver)', 2013, oil and acrylic on canvas, 140 x 120 x 5 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Chambers Fine Art.

**"GAMA: Idylls of the Kings"** runs at **Chambers Fine Art** in Beijing from 7 March to 3 May 2015. Selected works by the artist will also be shown at **Art Basel Hong Kong**.

### A true Mongolian nomad

GAMA (b. 1977, Mongolia) grew up in a nomadic Mongolian family that moved according to the seasons every four months. The habit of travelling followed him into his adulthood. After a brief enrolment at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, the artist chose to continue his artistic education at the Karlsruhe Academy in Germany. According to the exhibition press release, it was during this period that

*[GAMA] was exposed to the figurative painting of the New Leipzig School and soon found that the painterly skills and techniques he had mastered in Beijing could be used for entirely different ends than the more prosaic task of recording appearances.*



GAMA, 'Die Wächter IX (The Guardian IX)', 2013, oil on canvas, 300 x 250 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Chambers Fine Art.

### Cryptic, paradoxical spaces

The well-travelled artist's influences are thus diverse and far-reaching, stretching from European Old Masters to contemporary German painters. The press release states:

*The attentive viewer has no trouble in identifying references to Vermeer, Rembrandt, and Courbet among many others. [...] German Romanticism is very much in evidence. Caspar David Friedrich's great masterpiece The Sea of Ice (1823-24) is revived in [Ocean] Flame, the frozen wastes of the original parting to reveal a colourful shipwreck in the bottom right-hand corner [...].*



GAMA, 'A Deer of Nine Colors', 2014, oil on canvas, 200 x 180 x 5 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Chambers Fine Art.

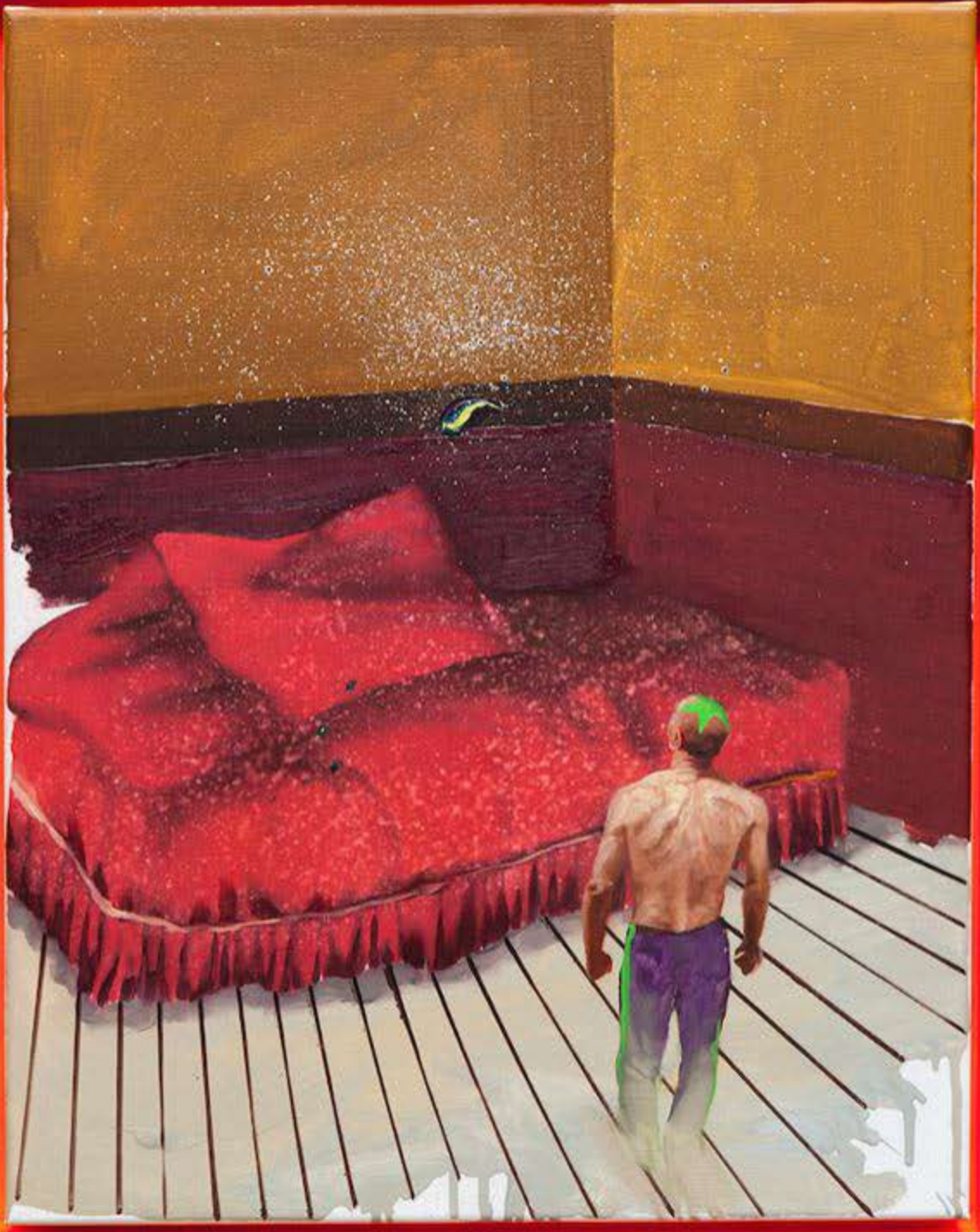
Despite heavy influences from these masters, GAMA's works are quirky and whimsical. He skillfully employs a rich, vibrant palette as well as Alice-in-Wonderland-esque distortions of scale. Often, as *Brogues in a Coffee Bar* **observes**,

*Tiny elf-like figures flit from painting to painting, just emerging from the corners and disappearing down secret trap doors.*

### **Underlying Mongolian heritage**

Underneath the whimsical is a subtle yet deeply rooted sense of the desolate. *Art Parasites* writes in a commentary to **an interview with the artist**:

*Despite the bright and seductive colours, [...] one cannot escape the grim, lonesome spaces that inhabit the canvases. The warm, candy-coloured portions [...] constitute the sweet, yet one senses that this sweet would not be as sweet if it wasn't for the sour undertones that surround them.*



GAMA, '1001', 2012, oil on canvas, 62 x 50 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Chambers Fine Art.

Such paradoxical undertones come from the artist's Mongolian heritage. He says in the interview:

*Life was very hard in Mongolia, but this hardship is coupled with wonderful scenery and a genuine closeness to nature – this somehow makes the difficulties bearable. [...] In a direct way, my Mongolian heritage reflects itself in my art through the colours, a feeling of infinity and an expansive skyline.*

### Shamanic philosophy

Almost all of GAMA's paintings depict rooms – fantastically detailed interiors that set the stage for enchanting fairytales. The artist explains the flipping of interior and exterior **in an interview** with *Horst und Edeltraut*:

*The real world is subdivided into two parts: the exterior and the interior. The exterior is nature, landscapes, heaven, earth and the animals, [...] the interior is a western interior. In my paintings I try to merge these two rooms or worlds. [...] The rooms that I paint are imaginary rooms, which combine these two worlds. I make the rules there. This is where I have my guardians, angels, mythical creatures [...]. This is where I can have a landscape on top of a mattress or a house that is made of a mushroom.*



GAMA, 'Labsal (Alchemy)', 2009, oil on canvas, 300 x 400 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Chambers Fine Art.



GAMA, 'Baraker (Bath)', 2010, oil on canvas, 250 x 300 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Chambers Fine Art.

GAMA's great aunt was a Shaman who was able to connect to the supernatural world. The artist attributes his artistic philosophy to Shamanism, saying in the *Art Parasites* interview that:

*A shaman functions between two worlds (the physical world and the spirit world) – my paintings also incorporate two worlds (the interior and the exterior). What a shaman does with his body, I attempt to do with paint and canvas.*