

NOIRE IDOLE

OPIUM, DIEU CRUEL

Ronan Juglard. Preface by Emmanuel Pierrat and Alexandre Hougron

Noire Idole is an invitation to a motionless journey within a private collection, a compendium of sophisticated art objects brought together around the theme of opium smoking in the Chinese manner. The author invites us on a sensitive and dreamlike detour into darkness, alongside the reclining smoker, illuminated only by an oil lamp and the reflections of his paraphernalia – a miscellany entirely devoted to the fulfillment of the ritual. A contemporary gaze cast upon a polymorphous ensemble of previously unseen, high-quality pieces is matched by prose largely drawn from French colonial literature at the turn of the Belle Époque, with a strong focus on Indochina. The back-and-forth between the past of the text and the present of the image thus movingly illustrates how Asia and its opium were perceived through the prism of fantasy and Orientalism.

Ronan Juglard's childhood in Africa taught him that art follows function. Juglard is a self-taught photographer and his pictures are instinctive, his eye on the lookout for the telling detail. As a naval doctor, imagination became the only thing able to break through the cold metal hulls that were always too close for comfort in a submarine. Back on the surface, he was seized by a passion for collecting. It proved an incurable condition, since accumulation is a compensation and not the end product. It remains a wonderful remedy for a pessimism that could sweep everything away.

Emmanuel Pierrat is a lawyer and writer. He is a former member of both the French Bar Council and the National Council of the French Bar. He has been curator of the Paris Bar Museum, secretary general of the Yves Saint-Laurent Museum, in Paris, and a member of the Purchasing Committee of the Museums of Decorative Arts. After a period spent in a voluntary service overseas project in Calcutta, he specialised in intellectual property law and also became an agent acting on behalf of writers and artists. Emmanuel Pierrat is himself a bibliophile and collector of African art, as well as the author of *La Collectionniste* (Le Passage, 2011), *Les Nouveaux Cabinets de curiosité* (Les Beaux Jours, 2011) and *Collections, collectionneurs* (La Martinière, 2019).

Alexandre Hougron is an antique dealer and expert in Asian pieces. He is a former student at the École Normale Supérieure in Rue d'Ulm, where he studied literature, graduating with an agrégation in classical literature and later earning a PhD in cinema. He inherited his passion for Asia from his father, the writer Jean Hougron, who had a particular interest in China. In 2006, Alexandre and his mother, Victoria, opened the Galerie Beauté Chinoise, named after his latest book, at the Marché Biron in the heart of the Saint-Ouen flea market. In 2015, he published *La Céramique chinoise ancienne* (Éditions de l'Amateur).