

Erik Desmazières. French (b.1948)

Erik Desmazières' prints and drawings are fascinating explorations of places both real and unreal. In the artist's hand, cities, battles, libraries, and various curiosities are all rendered with the same virtuosity of draftsmanship as the Old Masters but encompass a cerebral twist. With the lines of Dürer, the vision of Piranesi, and a healthy dose of science fiction and fantasy elements, Desmazières captures on paper intricately complex and dreamlike spaces and scenes.

Born in Rabat, Morocco in 1948 to a French diplomat, Erik Desmazières has been described as “arguably the finest French printmaker of his generation.” After graduating from the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris in 1971, he turned his attentions towards the arts, having drawn since childhood. Desmazières enrolled in an evening course on drawing, and subsequently studied printmaking at the Cours du Soir de la Ville de Paris.

Looking through Desmazières' prints reveals an interest in several themes: cities and buildings, battles and warriors, libraries and letters, wonder chambers and curiosities, comedies and characters. With each, the artist envisions an imaginary world unto itself. Using an idiosyncratic visual language that draws from the past while looking towards the future, Desmazières creates scenes of civilizations and eras that never were, but certainly feel as though they could have been. Even in his prints depicting real world locations, the artist has the uncanny ability to make the scene around his audience feel both familiar and utterly foreign.

Desmazières has exhibited extensively, including solo shows in Paris, London, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Rome, Zurich, Osaka, and Tokyo; and in the U.S., Boston, Chicago, Houston, San Francisco, Seattle, and Savannah, among others. His most recent showed at the Musée de l'hospice Comtesse in Lille, France. His works is found in many fine institutions including the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Rijksmuseum, the British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Montréal, the Nelson Atkins Museum, Kansas City, the Achenbach Foundation, San Francisco, and more.

Desmazières has also received several artistic distinctions, including the prestigious Grand Prix des Arts de la Ville de Paris. He was elected into the Société des Peintres-Graveurs Français, where he has served as President since 2006, and was inducted into the Académie des Beaux-Arts de l'Institut de France in 2009.

The artist currently lives and works in Paris, France.