



# DANDELIONS

In case your ego was inflated from finishing that 1000-piece puzzle, behold the master of patience.

WORDS ANNIE SEBEL PHOTOS DUY ANH NHAN DUC



Paris might be undergoing the great dandelion shortage of this decade and it's all due to one man: artist, nature-lover and high priest of patience, Duy Anh Nhan Duc. Originally from Vietnam he found himself walking the streets of Paris, bag in hand, ready to swoop on a fresh dandelion, all thanks to his parents' decision to up roots and move to France when he was ten. Gone were his days in Saigon, roaming the streets with friends, climbing trees and enjoying the lush tropical plants, fruits and sunshine. They were replaced with a language he didn't speak and a country he knew nothing about. "During my first years in France, I missed the trees and more generally vegetation. Drawing soon became my bubble of oxygen; little by little I was drawing a fantasy world where trees and plants rule as master." While today he might not miss much about Vietnam, his love of nature and plants has a tight hold. His dream is to "meet the Amazon", and jaunts in nature recharge him and inspire his work. "Nature fascinates me. It all starts with a fascination for a specific species. It could be the arrangement of the petals of a flower, the architecture of a seed, the shape of a leaf, a fragile shoot... I love getting lost in nature. I can spend days in the wilderness contemplating and collecting, and this moment is my favourite one in my creation process. I become again a child in a treasure hunt."

But there's one plant that is his kryptonite; the dandelion. "They are a wonderful ingenuity of nature," Nhan Duc says. "Under their apparent fragility, they are one of the most skilful and vigorous species in the plant kingdom. For me they evoke untamed nature, free and wild. The dandelion is ever-present in my work, they fascinate me. Working with them requires time, patience and precision. When I start [a new work], months have been required to understand how to tame their volatile egrets in order to collect, transport and apply them."

Mainly collected from the southwest of France, Nhan Duc also keeps an eye out for dandelions while pounding the pavement in Paris. "My last exhibition at Colette required no less than 5,000 dandelions, all picked by me, one by one, in the southwest of France," says Nhan Duc. "My workshop is in Paris, and when I walk the street, I always have a special empty bag with me for plants. As soon as I see a dandelion, I pick it up. Above my desk, in my studio, there are always dandelions drying."

Once the dandelions are procured and dried, Nhan Duc delicately dissects the plant and proceeds to use pliers to place each egret in its assigned position, repeating the action over and over, hundreds of times, until the delicate geometric composition is complete. It is "a meticulous job that I particularly like because it's really a special moment with the plant, a kind of meditation."

Next, Nhan Duc is working on more botanical sculptures, this time departing from dandelions to embrace wheat. "I want to convey the feeling that I have when I look at a wheat field dancing in the sun." No matter what the project is, it's just an excuse to "tell stories about the plant kingdom." ⚡

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