

Yan Pei-Ming

Wanted

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This new body of work by Franco-Chinese artist Yan Pei-Ming is about the dynamics of desire. The small portrait presented in the gallery's first room is the starting point of the exhibition: it is painted after Lucien Freud's 1952 portrait of fellow artist and friend Francis Bacon, which was stolen in Berlin in 1988 never to be found – at least to this day.

Portraiture is the cornerstone of Yan Pei-Ming's practice. Best known for his epic, large-scale monochromatic renditions of iconic figures, ranging from popes to emperors and world leaders, he explores the representation of the human spirit through the medium of portraiture.

Yan Pei-Ming discovered the story of “the stolen portrait” and the fruitless hunt that ensued during a visit to the National Portrait Gallery. In 2001, its robbery was denounced by black and white posters with glaring red letters spelling the word W-A-N-T-E-D, in a style more reminiscent of Hollywood Westerns than the pursuit of a real-life missing artwork.

The canvases presented at MASSIMODECARLO in London all respect the stolen portrait's original proportions, in varying enlarged scales, each rendering Francis Bacon in different introspective postures. These portraits, like the multiple facets of a diamond - optically similar but never identical – seem to explore the complexity of Bacon's emotional states.

WANTED IN LONDON Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud represents the friendship at the heart of the exhibition. It is painted after a photograph of the two artists in London, in mirroring poses, a fleeting moment of serenity captured on camera.

With *Wanted*, Yan Pei-Ming points to the paradox of longing vs. possession, absence vs. presence, and what some are willing to do to get what they want. It should not be lost on us that Yan Pei-Ming chose to reimagine the missing portrait in a way that keeps it just out of reach - its absence still felt, its presence unresolved.

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Yan Pei-Ming was born in Shanghai in 1960; he lives and works between Dijon, Paris and Shanghai.

An artist of international fame, born into the Cultural Revolution during the Sixties, Yan Pei-Ming became a propaganda artist under the Maoist regime before emigrating to France in 1981, where he first studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Dijon, then at the Institut des Hautes-Études en Art Plastiques in Paris.

From the beginning of his career Pei-Ming has stood out for his interest in the human figure and portraiture. He began his series of expressionistic and monumental portraits of Mao Zedong in 1987 before moving on to other world-famous figures like the Buddha, the Pope and Bruce Lee, and private themes like the self-portrait and the figure of the father.

Yan Pei-Ming investigates and discovers in the act of painting how the portrait breaks out of its typical straitjacket and is once again revitalized. The artist famously uses a long, mop-sized brush to create his iconic images, working rapidly with wet-into-wet oil paint, using either a combination of white and black, or red and white paint. With each brushstroke, he literally experiences with his own body the components that form the icon and how those components can be reassembled and given a new meaning.

Recent solo exhibitions have been held in prominent institutions such as: Palazzo Strozzi, Florence (2023); Francisco Carolinum, Linz (2023); Musée Unterlinden, Colmar (2021); Petit Palais - Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, Paris (2019); Musée d'Orsay, Paris (2019); Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon, Dijon (2019); Villa Medici, Rome (2016); Belvedere Museum, Vienna (2016); CAC Malaga, Malaga (2015); QMA Gallery, Doha (2012); Fondation Vincent Van Gogh, Arles (2014); Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2009); San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco (2009); Musée du Louvre, Paris (2009); Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines (2008).

Group exhibitions include: MAXXI Museo Nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Roma, (2022); Flughafen Tempelhof, Berlin, (2021); Palais de Tokyo, Paris, (2021); Leopold Museum, Wien (2018); National Portrait Gallery, London (2018); The Bangkok Biennale (2018); Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2016); MKM Museum Küppersmühle für Moderne Kunst, Duisburg (2015); Grand Palais, Paris (2015); Centre Pompidou-Metz, Metz (2014); The Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul (2007); The Sevilla Biennale, Sevilla (2006); The Lyon Biennale (1997, 2000); Venice Biennale,