

GALERIE THADDAEUS ROPAC

LONDON PARIS SALZBURG



Yan Pei-Ming

Pape Paul III, 2017

Oil on canvas

300 x 250 x 6 cm (118,11 x 98,43 x 2,36 in)

Photo : André Morin © Yan Pei-Ming / Adagp Paris, 2018

YAN PEI-MING **DATING**

2 March – 21 April 2018

Press Preview

**2 March 2018, 10-11am
with the artist present**

Opening

Friday 2 March 2018, 6-8pm

7, rue Debelleye
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PRESS RELEASE

Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac Paris is pleased to present *Dating*, a new exhibition by Yan Pei-Ming. For this new exhibition Yan Pei-Ming audaciously brings together new oil paintings of Popes, Female nudes and erotic scenes, along with a series of gouaches.

Yan Pei Ming has long been fascinated by pope portraiture, and its role in the representation of power and authority. With his signature monochromatic palette and energetic brushstrokes, the artist revisits canons that have marked the history of this unique genre by referring to Titian, Giorgione, and Velazquez. His fascination also extends to how our knowledge of these canonical images comes from being reproduced and circulated to the point that they have their own place in our imaginary museum. In the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, the director of the Sprengel Museum in Hanover, Reinhard Spieler states: 'Yan Pei-Ming thus brings together the historical reality and personality of the great papal figures, the artistic giants Titian and Velázquez, and the level of commercial mass reproduction, which he transfers into a painterly reality, however, giving it an individual, artistic quality of its own. The various pictorial aspects aren't subject to hierarchical value judgements, and appear on equal footing.'

Each painting is transfigured by being rendered in velvety hues of deep red and blue, giving them an intensity and rawness that is further emphasised by the energetic brushwork. There is a gestural quality to Yan Pei-Ming's painting as revealed by the drips of paint, a recent development of his technique. For Yan Pei-Ming the physical act of painting itself is an essential aspect of the finished work.

The subtle gradations from red to blue allow for a sensorial and emotional impact as if Yan Pei-Ming was capturing the transition from cold to hot. The use of blue is preponderant in the exhibition, in the portraits of popes but also in his nudes. The artist refers to this specific colour as a 'Paris Blue'. This designation brings to mind Picasso's famous blue period. While some of the works translate the sense of might, typical of the genre, others convey a more melancholic mood as in *Le Titien*, 2017.

In the exhibition space the portraits of popes will converse with paintings of a completely divergent genre: female nudes and erotic scenes. As referred by the exhibition title, this is a date between power, women and painting. A dialogue of sorts to restore a balance between the archetypes of papal portraiture – considered a noble subject, and the female nude – a reputedly minor subject because of its links with genre painting.

By pairing works that are usually incompatible, the exhibition reflects on how image hierarchies have been abolished in our current information age, as we can so easily switch from a news image of a catastrophe, to a sexually charged advertisement image or a more banal everyday image. Rather than creating a specific narrative, the exhibition seeks to represent the heterogeneity of our visual landscape.

Although quite rare in Yan Pei-Ming's body of work, female nudes and erotic scenes have been important for Ming early on in his career. In some of his first listed paintings, in 1986, there are explicit references to the nude. He further explored the theme in his iconic *Eros City* series (2004), portraying prostitutes of capital cities in crimson red. Regarding Yan Pei-Ming's recent nude painting Bernard Marcadé states: 'Yan Pei-Ming's painting does not, in itself, seek to seduce. It is always located at the most sensitive points, in the troublesome areas of our world.'

Most of the nude's titles are simply pronouns: *Elles*, *Elle avec Elle*, *Lui avec Elle*, *Elle avec Moi*, some may be prostitutes, others resemble a famous figure in the history of painting, but the pronouns as titles render the subject non-specific, the painting then attains a universal quality. One of the female portraits is however titled a specific name: Suzanne, which could evoke the name of a prostitute, as well as the episode of Suzanne and the elders. The notion

of universality that the artist has always put forth: 'I've always tried to speak in a universal pictorial language'.

The female nude is also explored in a suite of grisaille gouaches on view in the upper gallery space. This is the first time since the mid-1980s that Yan Pei Ming works with this medium. The grey gouaches are based on historical photographs from the Nicéphore Niépce Museum collection in Chalon-sur-Saone, France. This series is marked by a sense of intimacy and mystery.

Power is conveyed not only in the choice of subject matter and the materiality of the painting but also through the gaze. Through the audacious display, looks will meet, cross or interplay: the voyeur gaze, the spectator's gaze and the artist's gaze. A self-portrait by Ming titled *Lui* will also be hung on an upper-wall of the exhibition space, watching the play take place.

A catalogue with essays by Bernard Marcadé and Reinhard Spieler will be published on the occasion of the exhibition.



Yan Pei-Ming

Elle préfère attendre, 2018

Oil on canvas, 50 x 61 x 2 cm (19,69 x 24,02 x ,79 in)

Photo : André Morin

© Yan Pei-Ming / Adagp Paris, 2018

Yan Pei-Ming (b. Shanghai in 1960) studied at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Dijon. He lives and works between Dijon and Ivry-sur-Seine. Over the past decade, the artist has had solo exhibitions at the Villa Medici, Rome, 2016; Belvedere, Vienna, 2016; Museum Nicéphore Niépce, Chalon-sur-Saône, France, 2016; CAC Màlaga, Malaga, 2015; CAFA Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, 2014; Fondation Vincent Van Gogh, Arles, 2014 ; Musée du Louvre, Paris, 2009; San Francisco Art Institute , 2009; Shanghai Art Museum, 2005; Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China, 2005.

His paintings are part of museum collections worldwide, including the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Kunsthalle Mannheim, Germany; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, France; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo and the Shanghai Art Museum.

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