

## Six Two Zen

A Yang Jiechang's solo exhibition

Curator: Martina Köppel-Yang

Opening: 2018.9.1, 16:00

Dates: 2018.9.1 - 10.18

Venue: Tang Contemporary Art Beijing Space II

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Tang Contemporary Art is proud to announce the opening of Yang Jiechang's solo exhibition "Six Two Zen" on September 1, 2018, in the 2nd space of Beijing. Curated by Dr. Martina Köppel-Yang, this exhibition will present a video and three distinctly different ensembles of works created during the last fifteen years: *Scroll of Secret Merit* (2004) and *Underground Flowers* (2004), *Tale of the 11<sup>th</sup> Day* and *Stranger than Paradise* (2010-2018), and finally *These are Still Flowers* (2012 -2018).

*Six Two Zen* is the title of a video loop showing the artist making a terrible face like that of the revengeful God of Thunder, Leigong. In many of his works Yang proposes this kind of duality-transcending position to the viewer: there is no traditional or contemporary, no Eastern or Western, no political-correct or subversive, no beautiful or ugly, no good or bad; and, in this sense, the artist considers Leigong's terrible grimace an auspicious sign. The awareness of the existence of a position in between, an alternative view going beyond a dialectical perception of the world, marked Yang Jiechang's way of thinking from very early on and is his key strategy to relate to reality and life in a deeper and more immediate way.

*Scroll of Secret Merit*, a four-panel ink painting, shows bones drifting apart in some kind of vacuum. The artist doesn't give any further information of the circumstances. Plain and prosaic, the bones are ghostly reminders of catastrophe and decay, strange and yet familiar, they appear like eternal friends. Even though they clearly speak of death, these drifting bones seem alive. In *Underground Flowers*, life-size porcelain bones are painted with elegant flowers. Death is part of life, and just a stage in a perpetual circuit. These are not Western vanitas- representations, evoking the transience of life and the futility of pleasure, but depictions of defiant specters, persisting in time, accepting death but not defeat. History is full of this kind of specters and history and its specters is an important subject in Yang Jiechang's oeuvre.

The paintings from the *Stranger than Paradise* and *Tale of the 11<sup>th</sup> Day* series, are multi-panel panoramas in the traditional meticulous colour painting technique and depict some kind of dubious paradise. The depicted panoramas rely on classical models stemming from the canon of traditional Chinese landscape painting, thus suggesting a kind of universal landscape. Yang's image of a land where impartial communication and action is possible, reminds us on a globalized world, yet one based on equality, on mutual respect and compassion. Then *Tale of the 11<sup>th</sup> Day* - the title is alluding to Boccaccio's *Il Decamerone* - would be the allegory of such a utopia. However, similar to Boccaccio's *Decamerone*, which is a collection of stories told in times of the Black Death, Yang's *Tale of the 11<sup>th</sup> Day* reminds us that even though all beings are interconnected in an essential unity of existence, harmony still is based on power play.

In Yang Jiechang's oeuvre the evil not only is an aesthetic construct but also a field of research. In the exhibition the series *These are still Flowers* shows his probing into this direction. As Karl Heinz Bohrer's reflections on the aesthetic evil, "the aesthetic evil represents some kind of utopian borderline that has to be transgressed." *These are still Flowers* is a collection of copies of flower paintings done by young Adolf Hitler before 1913. Each set consists of an authentic copy and then a free interpretation in the style of Northern Song Dynasty Emperor Huizong (1100 - 1125 AD), and not enough, some of the sets are complemented by a three-dimensional version in porcelain, which actually is a copy of Yang Jiechang's copy executed by an artisan. Yang Jiechang approaches both personages from the angle of art and culture through the method of copying. Doing so he eschews historical judgment as a sole and first approach to these historically problematic figures. Yang Jiechang's choice of this kind of model is an extreme and a courageous one. The field he probes into is overly charged with negative sentiments, moral convictions and political positions, and raises questions that still cannot be discussed impartially today. Confronted with this kind of dilemma Yang Jiechang states: "If you choose such an extreme position, then you choose the freedom of art."

## About Artist

Yang Jiechang was born in Foshan, Guangdong Province, PR China in 1956. Lives and works in Paris and Heidelberg since 1989. Graduated from the Chinese Painting department of the Guangzhou Fine Arts Academy, PR China in 1982. Teacher at the Guangzhou Fine Arts Academy, Guangzhou, PR China in 1982 - 1988. Residency at Kunstwerke, Berlin, Germany in 2003. Visiting artist at Stanford University Medical School, Stanford, California, USA in 2003. Sterling visiting Professorship at the Stanford University Medical School, Department of Chemical and Systems Biology, Stanford, California, USA in 2008.

His important exhibitions include: *Six Two Zen - Yang Jiechang*, Tang Contemporary Art Beijing 2nd Space, Beijing, 2018; *Art and China after 1989: Theater of the World*, Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2017; *Carambolages*, Grand Palais, Paris, 2016; *Ink Art, Past as Present in Contemporary China*, Metropolitan Museum, New York, 2013; *Tale of the 11th Day*, OCT Art & Design Gallery, Shenzhen, 2012; *Reactivation* - Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai, 2012; *Stranger than Paradise*, La Criée, Centre d'art contemporain, Rennes, 2011; *The World Belongs to You*, Palazzo Grassi, Fondation F. Pinault, Venice, 2011; *Lyon Biennial*, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Lyon, 2009; *Istanbul Biennial*, Istanbul, 2007; *Liverpool Biennial*, Liverpool, 2006; *Laboratoires pour un avenir incertain*, La Force de l'Art - 1st Paris Triennial, Grand Palais, Paris, 2006; *Zone of Urgency*, 50th Venice Biennial, Venice, 2003; *China/Avantgarde*, National Gallery, Beijing, 1989; *Les magiciens de la terre*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1989.

## About Curator

Martina Köppel-Yang is an independent scholar and curator. She works in the field of contemporary Chinese art since the mid-1980s and has written extensively on the subject. Her PhD thesis *Semiotic Warfare – A Semiotic Analysis of Works of Art of the Chinese Avant-garde of the period from 1979 to 1989* (Hong Kong: timezone 8, 2003) is a reference book on the Chinese art of the 1980s. She is a member of the editorial board of *Yishu Journal for Contemporary China Art* and board member of *Asia Art Archive*.

Her exhibitions include: *Leased Legacy. Hong Kong 1997* (Frankfurt, 1997), *Infiltration: Idylls and Visions* (Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, 2006), *Surplus Value and Accumulation – Canton Express* (Tang Contemporary, Beijing, 2006), *Ink-Life-Taste of the 5th Shenzhen International Ink Painting Biennale* (Shenzhen, 2006), *Onda Anomala part of Manifesta 7* (Trento, 2008), and *Becoming Intense, Becoming Animal, Becoming...* (Heidelberg University, 2009), *Advance through Retreat* (Rockbund Museum of Art, Shanghai, 2014), *Good Morning Hong Kong* (French May, Alisan Fine Arts, Central Library, Hong Kong, 2015), *The Writings of Today are a Promise for Tomorrow - Yangjiang Group* (Palazzo Morosini, Venice, 2015), *7+1 Luckily you are here* (CIGE, Beijing, 2015).

Tang Contemporary Art

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Please contact the gallery in advance to arrange an interview.