

Yan Pei-Ming PORTRAITS

Francisco Carolinum Linz

24.05. – 13.08.23

The Chinese artist Yan Pei-Ming has been in the spotlight of the international art scene for the past several decades with his large-scale, monochrome portraits. Using bold and expressive brushstrokes, the artist has portrayed historical figures, political leaders, celebrities, and soldiers, but also serial killers, prisoners, orphans, popes, and even Buddha, Mao, and Bruce Lee. A fluid yet precise technique is conjoined here with a flattened pictorial space to create iconic and psychologically penetrating works that command an extraordinary presence.

Yan Pei-Ming was born in 1960 in Shanghai, China. He moved to France in 1980 to study at the École des Beaux-Arts in Dijon. This is where he developed his distinctive style, influenced by both the Western artistic tradition and Chinese calligraphy.

Yan Pei-Ming's portraits impressively attest to how an engagement with Western painting can enter into a fruitful synthesis with Chinese tradition. By fusing various cultural influences, he contributes to fostering greater understanding and exchange between East and West on the contemporary art scene.

The large-format portraits display vigorous brushstrokes and an agile style. The artist mostly maintains a monochromatic palette, chiefly black and white, to create a fascinating play of light and shadow. This interplay has the effect of emphasizing the emotions and personalities of his models and lends the portraits a soulful depth and intensity. At the same time, it reveals the multifaceted complexity of being human.

In an era when the art world is searching for new ways to depict the diversity of human experience, Yan Pei-Ming's portraits offer an arresting and compelling look at the essence of who we are. His art makes a powerful statement as a striking example of the beauty and the power wielded by painting.

Yan Pei-Ming's portraiture usually goes far beyond reproducing a mere likeness; he also alludes therein to far-reaching historical themes and thus to the gap that exists between events and their visualization. The artist often makes use of an assemblage of images from the mass media, combining them with his own thoughts on the subject to be portrayed. In this way, Ming expands our conventional understanding of the medium of painting.

The nearly 110 portraits on display at the Francisco Carolinum Linz, some of them painted exclusively for this exhibition, reflect various aspects of Western painting. The compositions, the use of light and shadow, and the expressive painting technique are reminiscent of works by European masters such as Rembrandt, Velázquez, and Francis Bacon. The artist draws on these influences to shape his own style and to effectively capture the spirit of his subjects.

Yan Pei-Ming's works have been exhibited at prominent institutions worldwide, including the Louvre, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the San Francisco Art Institute, and the National Museum of China in Beijing.

By presenting his works, the Francisco Carolinum Linz is raising its own profile as an important institution for contemporary art. The exhibition thus underscores Linz's role as one of the premier venues for international art in Upper Austria while promoting artistic dialogue on a global level.

The exhibition was created in cooperation with Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris.
Curators: Yan Pei-Ming & Alfred Weidinger

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