

YANG JIECHANG (1956, Foshan, China)



A true *literati* artist, **Yang Jiechang** inscribes traditional Chinese calligraphy and painting techniques into contemporaneity, creating art that is both contemplative and engaging. Believing that we can «*see the world in a single drop of ink.*» Yang Jiechang's work reflects the belief of ancient Chinese philosophers that *the best quality an artist can display is not to reveal one's skill or personality* – a quality of self-effacement, which requires years of training to perfect. In his art, he uses a number of different mediums, including calligraphy, painting, ceramics and printmaking as well as contemporary modes of expression, such as installations and video.

Four monumental panels from the artist's series ***Hundred Layers of Ink*** were first presented in 1989 in the exhibition *Les Magiciens de la Terre*, curated by Jean-Hubert Martin at the Centre Pompidou. The gallery also presented this series of work at FIAC in 1989 and at the gallery in 1991, and since then in countless exhibitions both at the gallery and in international institutions. Yang Jiechang's solo exhibition *Dark Writings*, held in 2019, celebrated the artist's **thirty years of collaboration with the gallery.**

Alike "earth roots," his series of *Hundred Layers of Ink* is now being presented at *Asia Now*, the Asian art fair in Paris. Exploring their relationship to materiality and immateriality, these works are comprised of successive layers of ink made from distilled cypress wood charcoal, resins, essential oils and extracts from medicinal plants. Echoing cracks in the earth, the fluidity of rivers or shimmering water, silvery and woody mazes undulate on the works' surface, evoking Buddhist thangka paintings. His soy sauce drawings were created in 1988, when the artist had just arrived in Europe, in Heidelberg, hometown of his wife, Martina Köppel-Yang. Applied to sheets pulled from computer printers found at the University of Heidelberg where his wife was studying, Yang Jiechang worked with soy sauce instead of ink. The resulting shapes recall Buddhist and Taoist *steles* and *sutras* or scriptures from the *Qi Dynasty*, found at the entrance to

the Chinese monasteries. Recently rediscovered in the artist's studio in Paris, these works are being shown to the public at *Asia Now* for the very first time.

Blue and white porcelain skulls from the Ming period pay tribute to the victims of the Tiananmen Square Massacre in Beijing in 1989. Made in China at the Jingdezhen porcelain factory, these "flowering bones" reflect the Taoist teaching that "*every death leads to a new life*" since bones return to the earth and fertilize it. A *white flower* in porcelain, made in Dehua, Fujian province, renowned for its production of devotional objects, reflects the extreme refinement of Chinese porcelain. A work titled *The Last Tree*, made in ink and mineral colors on Xuan paper, echoes the eponymous *gongbi*-style silk painting in the collections of the Musée Guimet and also enters into dialogue with the artist's *Tale of the 11th Day*, an eighteen-meter-long fresco painting on silk shown in the rotonda of the Guimet Museum.

Véronique JAEGER



Exhibition views *Carte blanche à Yang Jiechang*, Musée national des arts asiatiques - Guimet, 2022 © Thierry Ollivier

The Musée national des arts asiatiques - Guimet is devoting a *Carte blanche* to the artist from 6 July to 24 October 2022.

Visitors to the Musée national des arts asiatiques-Guimet are greeted on the first floor by a silk painting entitled *Tibetan Pavilion - Self-Portrait at 50*, illuminated by a neon light on the floor, which combines the artist's self-portrait and the portrait of the Dalai Lama. *Underground Flowers* (1989-2009), an installation consisting of numerous skulls and bones in porcelain posed on calligraphic silk, decorated with blue and white flowers reminiscent of decorative objects from the Ming dynasty, pays tribute to the victims of the *Tiananmen Square Massacre*. The series *Cent couches d'encre* [One Hundred Layers of Ink], explores the relationship of materiality to immateriality. Successive layers of ink made from distilled cypress wood charcoal, resins, essential oils and extracts from medicinal plants, these paintings change as the viewer moves around them, revealing endless subtleties in their shiny and matte surfaces.

Presented in the fourth-floor rotunda of the Musée Guimet, *Tale of the 11th Day* (2011) is an 18-meter-long painting on silk mounted on canvas, like *gongbi* paintings, presented with an ensemble of eleven porcelain vases creating during a four-year collaboration with artisans at the Manufacture de Sèvres.

Tale of the 11th Day is inspired by Boccaccio's *The Decameron* (1348-1353), a tale of ten days, and imagines the eleventh in a primeval landscape drawn in keeping with the classical canon of the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368).

Yang Jiechang's style is austere, pure and universal. He presents an allegorical vision of the Italian Renaissance masterpiece in which animals and humans come together, a paradise where all differences – religious, ethnic, ideological, political – have been eliminated. *Tale of the 11th Day* depicts a sensual utopia, a globalized world based on equality, respect, love and compassion, but Yang Jiechang's paradise was painted in a contemporary era marked by armed conflict and numerous crises. The installation reminds us that such a harmony is fragile, with relationships based on power in an unstable balance that is constantly being redefined. The exhibition will be on display until October 24, and was co-curated by *Sophie Makariou*, President of MNAAG, *Martina Köppel-Yang*, an art historian and the artist's wife, with *Claire Bettinelli*, in charge of production and contemporary collections at the museum. The exhibition was produced with the full support and collaboration of the Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger which has represented the artist since the 1990s, as well as the DSL Collection and AIKA, with the kind participation of the Manufacture de Sèvres.

MUSÉE
CERNUSCHI

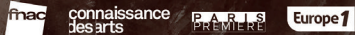


L'ENCRE EN MOUVEMENT

UNE HISTOIRE DE
LA PEINTURE CHINOISE
AU XX^E SIECLE

21 OCT. 2022 – 19 FÉVR. 2023

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Chang Dai-chien (Zhang Daqian, 1898-1983), Lettre simple le vent (1960), 1955,
Encre et couleurs sur papier, 38,4 x 95,2 cm, M.C. 1968, Don de l'artiste, 1996,
© Paris Musées / Musée Cernuschi et The Institute of Chang Dai-chien (Zhang Daqian) & DREAM ONE

Yang Jiechang's work is also being shown in the exhibition *Ink in Motion – A History of Chinese Painting in the 20th Century (L'Encre en Mouvement, une histoire de la Peinture Chinoise au XX^e siècle)* at the **Musée Cernuschi** from October 20, 2022, to February 19, 2023. Yang Jiechang is presented with the calligraphy *Yiqi dou shi kenengde (Everything is possible)* as well as the short film, made in 1990, showing Yang Jiechang working on the *Hundred Layers of Ink* series. The exhibition presents nearly 70 masterpieces in modern and contemporary Chinese painting, delicate treasures made of ink and paper that are rarely shown to the public. The exhibition is curated by Eric Lefebvre, Director of the Musée Cernuschi, and Mael Bellec, Chief Curator of the Musée Cernuschi.



Yang Jiechang, *Yiqi dou shi kenengde (Everything is possible)*, 2000, Ink on Xuan-paper, mounted on canvas, ca. 65 x 250 cm
© Felicitas Yang

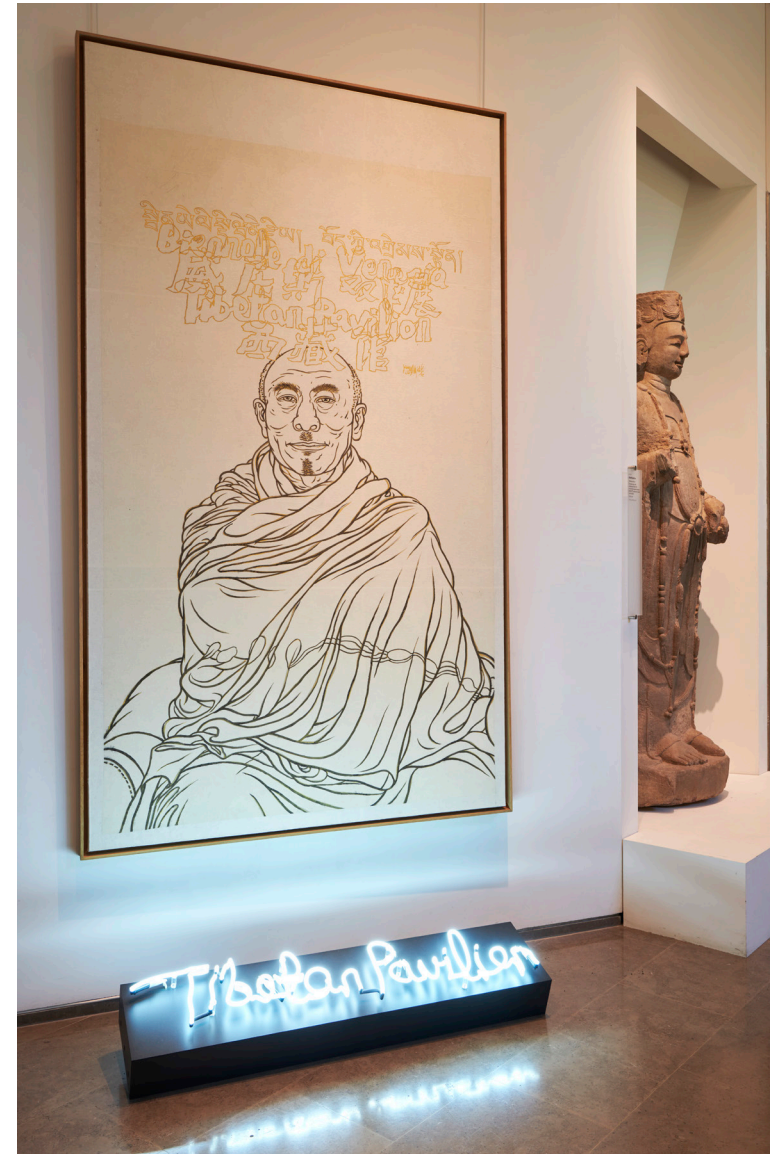
PHILOSOPHY

Yang Jiechang was born in 1956 in southern China where he lived until 1978. After participating in the Cultural Revolution as a Red Guard in the 1970s, the artist chose to move away from it by studying calligraphy and Chinese art history at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, where he learned to paint with ink and acquired a significant mastery of calligraphy as well as a knowledge of traditional Chinese thought. Over the course of several years, the artist was also introduced to Taoism and Zen Buddhism, which proved to be fundamental to the development of his formal language, reduced to the essential.

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“Yang Jiechang’s art is somewhat idealistic, and even utopian. It rejects all forms of dominant and standardized rules. But he is by no means nihilistic. On the contrary, his art is always anchored in the ground in order to continually revitalize the road of life itself. Taking real life as it is and absorbing it as a natural part of his work, his is a cocktail of idealism, realism and utopia -- a pragmatic utopia.”

Hou Hanru, *Towards a World of Poets – Yang Jiechang’s work, ca- talogue Yang Jie Chang : No-Shadow Kick, Shanghai / Duolun Mu- seum of Modern Art – Tang Contemporary Art, 2008*



Exhibition view *Carte blanche à Yang Jiechang*, Musée national des arts asiatiques - Guimet, 2022 © Thierry Ollivier

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (selection)

- 2022 *Carte Blanche à Yang Jiechang*, Musée Guimet, Paris, France
- 2021 *Yang Jiechang*, Online Viewing Room, Galerie Setareh, Düsseldorf Germany
Tale of the 11th day, Galerie de Sèvres, Paris, France
- 2019 *3 Souls 7 Spirits*, Shanghai Minsheng Art Museum, PR China
From Heaven to Hell, Beyond Gallery, Taipei, Taiwan
Dark Writings, Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, France
- 2018 *Six Two Zen*, Tang Contemporary, Pékin, PR, China
Presence and Absence - Mustard Seed Garden, Boxes Art Museum, Shund, PR, China
Yang Jiechang : Sehr Romantisch, Galerie Setareh, Düsseldorf, Allemagne
- 2017 *The Wip*, Chambers Fine Arts, New York, USA
This is Still Bird and Flower Painting, Alisan Fine Arts, Hong Kong
Mustard Seed Garden - Mayland Lake, Art House, Guangzhou, China
Yang Jiechang : Earth Roots, Ink Studio, Pékin, China
- 2016 *Like in heaven So on Earth*, Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Espace Marais, Paris, France
- 2015 *Good Morning Hong Kong*, exhibition for the French May, Hong Kong Central Library, Hong Kong, China
- 2014 *Yang Jiechang - Die Rechnung bitte*, Galerie ARNDT, Berlin, Germany
Yang Jiechang - These are still Landscapes, solo show, Ink Studio, Beijing, China
- 2012 *Yang Jiechang*, Museum of OCT Art and Design Gallery, Shenzhen, Chine
King of Canton, Hanart TZ, Hong Kong, China
Tale of the 11th Day, OCT Art & Design Gallery, Shenzhen, PR, China
- 2011 *Tale of the 11th day*, Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris, France
Stranger than Paradise, La Criée, Centre d'art contemporain, Rennes, France
- 2010 *Yang Jiechang : Tale of the 11th Day*, Tang Contemporary, Beijing, Chine
Yang Jiechang, Galerie Conrads, Düsseldorf, Germany
Underground Flowers, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de Rouen, Festival Automne en Normandie, France
- 2009 *On Ascension*, Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris, France
Territoria, special project, Associazione Culturale Cantiere d'Arte Alberto Moretti-Galleria Schema, Prato, Italy
- 2008 *No : Shadow Kick*, Duolum Museum, Shanghai, China
Biennale de Venise, Tibetan Pavillon, Edicola Notte, Rome, Italy
In God We Trust, Stanford University Medical School, Stanford,



Yang Jiechang, *The Last Tree*, 2021
 Ink and mineral colours on silk mounted on canvas,
 235 x 98 cm
 © Félicitas Yang and Armando Milano

- California, USA
- 2007 *The Most Beautiful Country of China*, HanArtTZ Gallery, Hong Kong, China
- 2006 *Tomorrow Cloudy Sky*, HanArtTZ Gallery, Hong Kong
Idylls, Grace Li Gallery, Zürich, Switzerland
- 2005 *Memorandums*, Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris, France
Hei Ji Sheng Xiang, Shenzhen Painting Institute, China
Who Occupies the Space?, Isola d'Arte, Milan, Italy
- 2003 *Lookchat*, Centre A, Vancouver, BC, Canada
For Emily, 4A Gallery, Sydney, Australie
- 2002 *Der längste Tag*, Kunstverein Nürtingen, Nürtingen, Germany
- 2001 *Enlightened Blackness (French May)*, Hong Kong University Museum/
 Alice King Gallery, Hong Kong, China
Double View, Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris, France
100 Layers of Ink, Cherng Ping Gallery, Taipeh, Taiwan
- 2000 *You - Double view*, Project Room, ARCO 2000, Madrid, Spain
- 1999 *Another Turn of the Screw*, Galerie de la Central, Academy des beaux arts, Beijing, China
Rebuild Dong Cunrui, Cherng Ping Gallery, Taipeh, Taiwan
- 1998 *Your Customs - Our Customs*, Altes Zollamt, Francfort, Germany
- 1996 Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris, France
- 1995 Galerie Samuel Lallouz, Montréal, Canada
 Galerie Alice Pauli, Lausanne, Switzerland
- 1994 *Cut the Fingernails from My Body*, Espace d'Art Contemporain Le Faubourg, Strasbourg, France
- 1993 *Rencontres dans un couloir*, private apartment of Hou Hanru, Paris, France
- 1992 *Troisième demeure mondiale*, Frankfurt, Germany
 Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris, France
 Galerie Turbulence, New York, USA
- 1991 *Works on paper*, Frith Street Gallery, London, UK
- 1990 *Voyage au Mexique*, Centro Cultural Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City, Mexico
 Salon de Mars, Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris, France
 Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris, France
- 1988 *Milky Way Exhibition N° 9*, Central Park Gallery, Canton Artists4 Association, Canton, China

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (selection)

- 2022 *L'Encre en Mouvement*, Musée Cernuschi, Paris, France
- 2020 *Longing for Nature. Reading Landscapes in Chinese Art*, Museum Rietberg, Zurich, Switzerland
Surge and Riverberation, Zhonglian Museum, Beijing, PR China
2020 Fifth Document Triennial, Hubel Museum, PR China
Imagination – Contemporary Ink Art Pedigree of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area 2000-2020, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, PR China
Chinese Contemporary Art Yearbook Exhibition, Pingshan Museum, Shenzhen, PR China
- 2019 *China Landscape. Selection from the Taikang Collection*, TaiKang MOCA, Beijing, PR, China
A Fairy Tale in Red Times, NGV Victoria Museum of Art, Melbourne, Australia
Yang Jiechang – 3 Souls 7 Spirits, Shanghai Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai, China
- 2018 *Art and China after 1989 : Theater of the World*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, USA
Art and China after 1989 : Theater of the World, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain
Art and China after 1989 : Theater of the World, Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA
- 2017 *Passion de l'Art*, Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger depuis 1925, Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence, France
- 2016 *Carambolages*, Grand Palais, Paris, France
- 2015 *La Chine ardente, œuvres contemporaines monumentales – Capitale Européenne de la Culture*, site des Anciens Abattoirs, Mons, Belgium
China's changing landscape, Amos Anderson Art Museum, Helsinki
- 2014 *China's changing landscape*, Nordiska Akvarellmuseet, Skärhamn, Suède
Advance through Retreat, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, China
Changing Landscape : China Ink Today, Nordiska Akvarellmuseet (Musée nordique de l'aquarelle), Skärhamn, Suède
- 2013 *Yuandao*, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong, China
From Gesture to Language, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, China
Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China, Metropolitan Museum, New York, EUA
Les aventures de la vérité, curator : Bernard-Henri Lévy, Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France
- 2012 *Sehnsucht : an unquenchable desire*, Château de Gaasbeek, Belgium
Clouds, Skissernas Museum (Musée des Esquisses), Lund, Suède
- 2011 *The World Belongs to You*, Palazzo Grassi, Fondation François Pinault, Venice, Italy
- 2010 *Hareng Saur* : Ensor et l'art contemporain, MSK et S.M.A.K, Ghent, Belgium
- 2009 Biennale de Lyon, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Lyon, France



(1) Exhibition view *The World Belongs to You*, 2006, Palazzo Grassi, Paris © All rights reserved

(2) Yang Jiechang, *Stranger than Paradise* (detail), 2010-2011, Ink and mineral colours on silk mounted on canvas, 7 panels, 282 × 145 cm each, Pinault Foundation Collection © Jean- Louis Losi

WORKS

Yang Jiechang began his *Hundred Layers of Ink* series in 1988, and pursued it for more than a decade, until the early 2000s. The works are built up with successive layers of traditional ink made with distilled cypress wood charcoal, essential oils, resins and medicinal plant extracts. Carefully working on rice paper and gauze strips, the artist built up the thickness of the material, exploring its depth and brightness on the matte surface. Applying, then covering over the layers of black ink on Xuan-paper, he achieved dense, graded monochromes that contain subtle variations depending on the paper's capacity to absorb and reflect light, and on the densities of the superimposed layers of ink.

The artist also created a set of eleven vases that are part of the series *Tale of the 11th Day*, produced in collaboration with the Manufacture de Sèvres. Presented at the Galerie de Sèvres in 2021, this series is currently on display at the Musée national des arts asiatiques - Guimet. The decoration on one of the vases reappears in *The Last Tree*, a painting of monkeys hanging on the bare branches of a large tree, grabbing onto its last leaves in an attempt to touch the moon. "An *allegory for human nature*," says Martina Köppel-Yang, associate curator of the exhibition *Carte Blanche to Yang Jiechang*. The artist created this highly detailed painting using the traditional technique known as *gongbi*, meticulously posing layer after layer of ink and color washes on silk.



Yang Jiechang, *100 Layers of Ink*, 1991
Ink on paper mounted on canvas
155 x 245 cm
© Jean-Louis Losi



Yang Jiechang

1. *Hundred Layers of Ink - Ink square O3*, 1991
2. *Hundred Layers of Ink - Two Halves*, 1991
3. *Hundred Layers of Ink - Wings O3*, 1991
4. *Hundred Layers of Ink - Magic Wand O3*, 1991
5. *Hundred Layers of Ink - Magic Wand O2*, 1991
6. *Hundred Layers of Ink - Stone Tablet O2*, 1991

Ink on Xuan-paper, mounted on canvas
84 x 59,5 cm
© Marc Damage



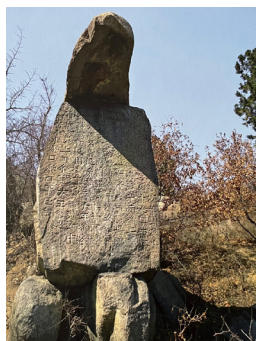
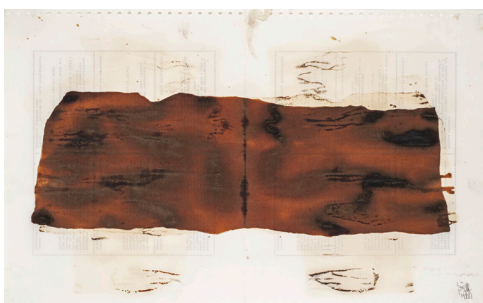
Yang Jiechang
The Last Tree, 2020
 Ink and mineral colours on paper,
 mounted on canvas
 245 x 100cm
 © Felicitas Yang



Yang Jiechang

1. *Hundred Layers of Ink - Root 02*, 1991
2. *Hundred Layers of Ink - Stone Tablet 01*, 1991
3. *Hundred Layers of Ink - Wings 02*, 1991
4. *Hundred Layers of Ink - Round*, 1991

Ink on Xuan-paper, mounted on canvas
 84 x 59,5 cm
 © Marc Damage



Yang Jiechang
Stèles, 1988
 Soy on computer paper
 37,5 x 61 cm
 © Jean-Louis Losi

Buddhist and Taoist *stèles* and *sutras* from the Qi Dynasty, found at the entrance to the Chinese monasteries.

Yang Jiechang
White Monkey, 2009
 Ink and mineral colours on silk,
 mounted on canvas
 55,9 x 26,6 cm
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Yang Jiechang
Stèles, 1988
Soy on computer paper
37,5 x 30,5 cm
© Jean-Louis Losi



Yang Jiechang
White Peony - These are Still flowers, 2013
Dehua porcelain
c. 15 x 15 cm
© Felicitas Yang



Yang Jiechang
Underground Flowers - Crâne, 1989 - 2009
Porcelain skull with blue/white pattern
16,5 x 12,5 cm
© Alex Tharreau



Exhibition views *Carte blanche* à Yang Jiechang, Musée national des arts asiatiques - Guimet, 2022 © Thierry Ollivier