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**HUANG YONG-PING**  
**Informational Packet of the Artist**



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## **Brief Introduction of the Artist**

Huang Yong Ping was born in 1954 in Xiamen city (China Fujian province). He lives and works in Paris since 1989. Huang's work combines many media and cultural influence, but is particularly strongly influenced by the intellectual abstraction of Dada and by Chinese numerology traditions. Founder of the Xiamen Dada group in China in the 1980s, Huang's installations have included unorthodox materials such as live snakes and scorpions. Many of Huang's sculptural works encompass a large scale, some tens of meters in dimension. Huang Yong Ping participated in the seminal exhibition "Magiciens de la Terre" at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris in 1989, and represented France at the 1999 Venice Biennale. In 2006, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis organized and premiered his retrospective "House of Oracles," which traveled to Mass MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts; Vancouver Art Gallery; and Ullens Center, Beijing.

## Selected Artworks



The History of Chinese Painting and the History of Modern Western Art Washed in the Washing Machine for Two Minutes , 1987 ,  
Photo of the results of the performance



REPTILES, 1989, Papier mache, washing machines 700 x 400 x 300 cm  
Installation, view of the exhibition « Magiciens de la terre », Grande Halle de la Villette, Paris



PALANQUIN, 1997, Bamboo, cane, snakeskin, Colonial hats, pillows 117,9 x 313,1 x 60 cm  
Installation, view of the exhibition « House of oracles », Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

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A MAN, NINE PETS, 1999, Wood, aluminum 23 x 17 x 8 m  
Installation, 48th Venice Biennale, Venice Italie

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CRANE'S LEGS, DEERS TRACKS, 1999, Aluminum sheets, pine, crab and deer taxidermisé, pigments 1200 x 1200 x 400 cm  
Installation, view of the exhibition « Crane's legs, Deers tracks », Projetc Gallery at CCA Kitakyushu, Japan





11 JUNE 2002 - THE NIGHTMARE OF GEORGE V , 2002, Stuffed animals, steel, wood, paintings, cushions, plastic, etc. 243,8 x 355,6 x 167,6 cm Installation, View of the exhibition » House of miracles « , Walker art Center, Minneapolis



TWO TYPHOONS, 2002, Burnt paper 406,4 x 114,3 x 114,3 cm chq.  
Installation, view of the exhibition « House of miracles », Walker art Center, Minneapolis



Wu Zei, 2010, Mixed media View of the installation, Musée Océanographique de Monaco, Monaco, 2010 ADAGP Photo. André Morin



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## Artist CV

### SOLO SHOWS

**2009** Arche 2009, Chapelle des Petits Augustins, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris.  
Caverne 2009, kamel mennour, Paris.  
Tower Snake, Barbara Gladstone gallery, New York.

**2008** House of Oracles, Ullens center for Contemporary Art, Beijing  
Ping Pong, Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, Norway  
Ping Pong, Kunsthallen Brandts, Odense, Denmark  
Frolic, Barbican Art Gallery, London, UK.

**2007** From C to P, Gladstone Gallery, New York.  
House of Oracles, Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada.

**2006** Panthéon, Ile de Vassivière, France.  
Les Mains de Bouddha, Galerie Anne de Villepoix, Paris, France.  
House of Oracles, MASS MOCA, North Adams, Massachusetts, USA.

**2005** House of Oracles, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA.

**2003** Un cane italiano, Galerie Beaumont, Luxembourg.

**2002** Xian Wu, Art & Public, Genève, Suisse.  
Om Mani Padme Hum, Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York, USA.

**2000** Taigong fishing, Willing to Bite the Bait, Galerie Jack Tilton, New York, USA.

**1999** Crane's legs, Deer's tracks. Project Galerie à CCA Kitakyushu, Japon.

**1997** HUANG Yong-Ping, Galerie Jack Tilton, New York, USA.  
HUANG Yong-Ping, De Appel, Amsterdam, Holland.  
Da Xian-The Doomsday, Art & Public, Genève, Suisse.  
Le sage suivant l'exemple de l'araignée qui tisse sa toile", Galerie Beaumont, Luxembourg.  
Péril de mouton, Fondation Cartier pour l'Art contemporain, Paris, France.

**1996** Trois pas, Neuf traces, Atelier d'Artistes de la Ville de Marseille, France.

**1995** Pharmacie, Galerie Fromen & Putman, Paris, France.

**1994** Kearny Street, Capp street Project, San Francisco, USA.  
Chinese Hand-Laundry, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, USA.

**1993** 1 & 108, Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, Allemagne.



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**1992** La maison d'augure, Galerie Fromen & Putman, Paris, France.

**1991** Réapparition de la Croix-Rouge, Hopital Ephémère, Paris, France.

Nous devons encore construire une grande cathédral, Galerie Fenster, Francfort, Allemagne.

**1990** Sacrifice au feu, (Cézanne, Saint-Victoire 1990), L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts d'Aix-en-Proence, France.

HUANG Yong-Ping, L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts d'Avignon, France.

HUANG Yong-Ping, L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Rouen, France.

## GROUP SHOWS

**2010** Reshaping History, Chinart from 2000 to 2009, CNCC, Beijing, China.

Le Jardin emprunté, Jardins du Palais Royal, Paris.

Yan Pei-Ming, Destinies & Huang Yong Ping, 08.02.10, Carlson Gallery, London, UK.

**2009** Le spectacle du quotidien, 10<sup>th</sup> Lyon Biennale, Lyon.

4<sup>th</sup> Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale, Fukuoka, Japan.

3<sup>rd</sup> Moscow Biennale, Moscow, Russia.

Fare Mondi / Making Worlds, 53<sup>rd</sup> Venice Biennale, Venice.

Mapping the Studio: Artists from the François Pinault Collection, Punta della Dogana – François Pinault Foundation, Venice.

**2008** Medium Religion, ZKM | Museum for Contemporary Art, Karlsruhe, Germany.

Artseason, The China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China.

God & Goods, Villa Manin Centre d'Art Contemporanea, Italy.

Traces du Sacré, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France.

Traces du Sacré, Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany.

China Power Station III, Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg.

Avant-Garde China : Twenty years of Chinese Contemporary Art, The National Art Center, Tokyo, Japan.

Avant-Garde China : Twenty years of Chinese Contemporary Art, The National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan.

**2007** 85' New Wave, The Birth of chinese contemporary art, Ullens center for contemporary Art, Beijing 798, China.

Global multitude, European Capital of Culture 2007, Luxembourg and Greater Region.

The Yan Pei-Ming Show, Galleria Massimo de Carlo, Milan, Italy.

10<sup>th</sup> International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turkey.

**2006** The Unhomely, 2<sup>nd</sup> International Biennial of Contemporary Art of Seville, Espagne.

Wherever we go, Museo di Fotografia Contemporanea, Milan, Italie.

Uitnodiging, Kunstvereniging, Diepenheim, Holland.

Biennale Internationale de Ceramique Contemporaine Vallauris, France.

La force de l'Art grand Palais 2006, Paris, France.

**2005** Contrepoint, de l'objet d'art à la sculpture, Louvre, Paris, France.

Biennal de Chine, Montpellier, France.

Wall, The China Millennium Altar, Beijing, China.



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**2004** Odyssée 2004, Shanghai Gallery, Shanghai, China.

São Paulo Biennial 26, São Paulo, Brésil.

Liverpool biennial, Liverpool, UK.

Le moine et le démons, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, Lyon, France.

A l'ouest du sud de l'est/A l'est du sud de l'ouest, Villa Arson, Nice, / CRAC Centre Régional d'Art Contemporain, Sète, France.

All under heaven, Ancient and contemporary Chinese art The Collection of the Guy & Myriam Ullens Foundation, MuHKA (Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp), Antwerp, Belgium.

Lingchi: YanPeiMing et Huang Yong Ping, Musée Denon, Chalon-sur-Saône, France.

This much is certain, Royal college of Art, London, UK.

**2003** Left wing, Left Bank community, Pekin, Chine.

New Zone Chinese Art, The Zacheta Gallery of Contemporary Art, Varsovie, Pologne.

Edges of the Earth, China Academy, Hang Zhou, Chine.

Yankee Remix: Artists Take on New England, Mass Moca, USA.

Z.O.U-Zone of Urgency, The 50<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennial, Venice, Italie.

Arte y naturaleza II, Montonmedio Arte Contemporaneo, Espagne.

Lingchi : YanPeiMing et Huang Yong Ping, Musée Denon, Chalon, France.

**2002** Reinterpretation: A Decade of Experimental Chinese Art (1990-2000), Guang Dong Museum of Art, Chine.

Art Unlimite, Art 33 Basel, Suisse.

Recolt, Museum of agriculture, Beijing, Chine.

Biennial Sao Paulo, Brésil.

**2001** Huang Yong Ping & Shen Yuan, Center d'Art contemporain Quebec, Canada.

Internationa Triennial of Contemporary Art Yokohama 2001, Yokohama, Japan.

Re-Configuration: Work on Paper, The Courtyard Gallery, Beijing; Modern Chinese Art Foundation, Gent, Belgique.

Made in Asia ? Duke University Museum of Art, Durham, North Carolina, USA.

Troubler l'écho du temps, oeuvre de la collection, Lyon, France.

**2000** Paris pour escale, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France.

Biennial Shanghai, Shanghai, Chine.

Voilà, le monde dans la tête, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France.

Unnatural Science, MASS MOCA, North Adams, MA, USA.

3 Räume-3 Flüsse, Hannover, Münden, Allemagne.

La beauté, Le Palais des Papes, Avignon, France.

Continental shift, Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Liège, Belgique.

Over the Edges, Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gand, Belgique.

Parcou, Saint-Germain-des-prés, Maison de la Chine, Paris, France.

**1999** Zeitwenden, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Allemagne.

Kunstwelten im Dialog, Museum Ludwig, Köln, Allemagne.

Sultan's Pool, Israel festival, Jerusalem, Israel.

Passage : New French Art. Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo, Japon.

Flashes, Collection Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Centro cultural de Belém, Lisbon, Portugal.

V O C, Handle with care, Huang Yong Ping & Yang Mao-Lin, at Ateneo San Basso, Venise, Italie.



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The 48<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, Jean-Pierre Bertrand et Huang Yong Ping, French Pavillon, Venise, Italie.  
Passage. Watari-Um, Tokyo, Japon.

Global Conceptulism : Points of Origin 1950 – 1980, Queens Museum of Art, New York, USA.

Unfinished History. Museum of modern Art, Chicago, USA.

Inside out : New chinese Art, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, USA.

Cities on the move 4. Louisiana Museum of modern Art, Denmark.

**1998** Gare de l'Est, Casino Luxembourg Forum d'art contemporain. Luxembourg.

Inside out : New chinese Art. PS1 and Asia Society Galleries, New York, USA.

Cities on the move 3. PS1, New York, USA.

Unfinished History, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA.

Hugo Boss Prize 1998, The Guggenheim Museum Soho, New York, USA.

Être nature, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, France.

Cities on the move 2, Capc Musée d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux, France.

Huang Yong Ping and Xu Bing, Art Beatus, Vancouver, Canada.

**1997** Cities on the move, Secession, Wien, Autriche.

Johannesburg Biennale 97, Johannesburg, Afrique du Sud.

Open Air Sculpture Symposium, Tong Young, Corée.

97 Kwangju Biennale, Kwangju, Corée.

Truce : Echoes of Art in an Age of Endless Conclusion Site Santa Fe, Santa Fe, USA.

In between Limits, Sonje Museum of Contemporary Art, Kyongju, Corée.

Verpachtetes Erbe, Museum für Kunsthandwerk, Frankfurt, Allemagne.

Sculpture project in Münster 1997, Münster, Allemagne.

Parisien(en)s, Camden Arts Centre, London, UK.

Promenade in Asia 2, Shiseido Galerie, Tokyo, Japon.

**1996** Face à l'Histoire, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France.

Linien & Zeichen, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, Allemagne.

Steirischer Herbst 96, (Inclusion-Exclusion), Reinighaus, Graz, Autriche.

Manifesta 1, Natural History Museum Rotterdam, Holland.

**1995** Unser Jahrhundert, Menschenbilder-Bilderwelten, Museum Ludwig Köln, Allemagne.

Galerie des 5 Continents, Musée national des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Paris, France.

Ripple Across the water, The Watari-um Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japon.

6 Triennial Febach 1995, SüdwestLB Forum Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Allemagne.

**1994** Heart of Darkness, Stichting Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, Holland.

Hors-Limites, (L'Art et La Vie 1952/1994), Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France.

A collection, (Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain), National Museum of Contemporary Art, Séoul, Corée.

Huang Yong Ping et Matej Kren, Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris, France.

Out of the Centre, Porin Taidemuseo, Pori, Finland.

5 Internationale Biennial der Papierkunst, Eopold-Hoesch Museum, Duren, Allemagne.

Hommages à Marcel Duchamp, Ecole Régionale des Beaux-Arts, Rouen, France.



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**1993** Fragmented Memory: The chinese Avant-Gard in Exile, Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio, USA.

Rendez(-)vous, Musée Van Hedendaagse, Gant, Belgique.

Silent Energy, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, UK.

Coalition, Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow, UK.

Intervention dans Collection, Musée de l'Assistance Publique, Paris, France.

China Avant-Garde, Haus der Kulturen der Wely, Berlin, Allemagne.

**1992** Parcours Privés 1992, Paris, France.

Résistance, Watari-um Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japon.

Lifisize, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Prato, Italie.

**1991** Carnegie International 1991, The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburg, USA

Exceptional Passage, Fukuoka, Japon

Carte Blanche à André Magnin, Galerie Fromen & Putman, Paris, France.

**1990** Rencontres Internationales Architecture Textile, Nime, France.

Chine demain pour hier, Pourrières, France.

**1989** Métissage, Croisement, .F.R.A.C. Marseille, France.

Magiciens de la Terre, Centre Georges Pompidou et Grande Halle de la Villette, Paris, France.

Chine Avant-Garde, China National Art Gallery, Beijing, Chine.

**1986** Events, Museum of fine Arts of Fujian, Fujian, Chine.

Xiamen Dada, Maison de la Culture de Xiamen, Chine.

**1983** Exhibition of Five Artists, Cultural Palace of Xiamen, Xiamen, Chine.





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## Reviews

### 'House of Oracles' Looks Back at Huang Yong Ping's Legacy

HOLLAND COTTER

NORTH ADAMS, MASS. — Everything, everything must change, says the Tao. Consider the course of contemporary Chinese art. Two decades ago it barely existed, at least as far as we knew. By the 1990's, it was a crouching tiger on the international scene, powerful but held back. Now the tiger has taken a giant leap upward, in value and visibility, thanks to two wildly successful Sotheby's auctions in the last few weeks, in New York and Hong Kong.

The results: much talk of money, New China, new stars. Yet one major figure, Huang Yong Ping, among China's most influential avant-garde artists, was all but absent from the sales. A former star in descent? Hardly, judging by "House of Oracles: A Huang Yong Ping Retrospective," the dynamite midcareer survey at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art here. But he is a star of elusive luminosity.

Mr. Huang, 53, emigrated to Paris in 1989 and has lived there ever since. In addition, his art is not exactly auction-compatible. Much of his early work is insistently unbeautiful. A piece that he contributed to "Inside Out: New Chinese Art" at Asia Society and P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center in 1998 was little more than a heap of mulchy paper. He made it by throwing two books — an English-language textbook on 20<sup>th</sup>-century Western art and a classic Chinese art history book — together in a washing machine until they became a lump of pulp.

Size also keeps his art off the block. He has come to favor working in an increasingly grand — some would say operatic, even circuslike — scale. This tendency is spectacularly evident in the show. The entrance is flanked by two lion cages, empty except for gnawed bones. A carved wooden serpent, 140 feet long, twists through the air in the gallery beyond.

It soars over another cage, this one containing a miniature, living bestiary of lizards, scorpions, tarantulas, crickets and toads. Nearby is the House of Oracles itself, a large canvas military tent, a combination of laboratory and studio, filled with circular calendars, divination instruments, art materials and photographs of Mr. Huang taking readings from "The I Ching, or Book of Changes."

And this describes just one gallery. Elsewhere you'll find a huge wooden gourd stocked with herbal medicines, and two upright, columnlike paper scrolls, one printed in Tibetan, the other in Arabic. Then comes a startlingly realistic, life-size sculpture of a tiger jumping atop an elephant, and a model, molded from 20 tons of compacted sand and concrete, of a European-style domed building.



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Finally, upstairs, where the show ends, there's a full-size fighter plane, or half of one, with a skeletal cockpit and a walk-in fuselage made of plastic and bamboo.

Although Mr. Huang envisioned the exhibition as a single installation, a total work of art, it is hard to make quick, clear sense of the whole or its parts. The artist's personal history, however, offers some clues.

He began his career in the 1980's as a painter but was soon on another track. He and some friends formed one of China's most radical avant-garde collectives, the Xiamen Dada group. Gleaning information mostly from imported art magazines, he became a self-taught student of Joseph Beuys, John Cage and Duchamp.

In the mid-1980's, he invented an automatic painting machine from a roulette wheel. He also made a series of irreverent alterations to emblematic images, in one case combining the features of the Mona Lisa with those of a Leonardo self-portrait. The book-laundering piece is from around this time. It seemed to imply that art, far from being divided into West versus East, has always been a crazy-mixed-up thing. And the job of contemporary art was to destabilize the mix by eliminating anchoring notions like artist-genius, self-expression and signature style.

In 1989 Mr. Huang was invited to Paris to participate in "Magicians of the Earth," an exhibition that famously broke ground in bringing Western and non-Western art together. While he was there, the killings at Tiananmen Square took place, and he decided to stay in France.

As many critics have noted, Mr. Huang's art changed after his move. What he did in China was ephemeral, performance-based, Duchampian. The work he has produced in Europe has been more fixed and polished and, drawing heavily on Taoism and Buddhism, more obviously "Chinese."

Some critics have accused Mr. Huang of pandering to a Western appetite for the exotic after his move. But his interest in Taoism and Buddhism followed naturally from his devotion to Cage and Duchamp. Just as Western art had done in China, Chinese culture provided a degree of resistance to the European world he was suddenly immersed in. Whatever the final judgment on the pandering question, the retrospective, organized by Philippe Vergne, chief curator at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and co-curator of the current Whitney Biennial, is impressive. It has a complicated sense of newness: you have never seen anything quite like this art before, yet it feels musty and archaic, as if excavated from tombs. And unlike his earlier work, it carries a dense, particular content of stories, myths, esoteric lore and political commentary.

There are references to the dangers of immigration (the lion cages), to nature as simultaneously destructive and healing (the Darwinian bestiary, the medicine-filled gourd). And there is the repeated image of the artist as diviner, tactician and impresario, foretelling the future, meditating his moves, calculating the effects required in the production of a memorable existential theater.



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Certain recent pieces have a barely disguised topicality. The upright scrolls are the Twin Towers as Towers of Babel. The tiger-and-elephant tableau, based on 1911 photographs of George V of England perched atop an elephant during a lion hunt in Nepal, speaks of colonialism — once local, now global — under attack. The building of sand, based on a former British bank in Shanghai, is about economic miracles crumbling imperceptibly before our eyes.

The fighter plane piece upstairs, the show's newest work, was inspired by a specific event: the collision of a United States surveillance aircraft with a Chinese military jet over the South China Sea in 2001. Despite the intense political tension that resulted, China permitted the spy plane to be disassembled and shipped back to the United States.

Mr. Huang conceived his piece as a study in the enigmatic mechanics of political power, and he managed to give offense all around. Three attempts to realize the piece in China were thwarted by Chinese, French and United States authorities, who all, for different reasons, wanted the incident forgotten.

Possibly this on-again, off-again history explains why the results, while striking, feel a bit anticlimactic. Like other very recent projects by the artist, it is at once too ingenious and too obvious. It lacks the funky, metaphorical mystery of slightly earlier pieces, with their language of health and disease, nature and culture, past and future, seeking balance, forever in flux.

Even at its least poetic, though, his art is very different from what topped the charts at Sotheby's: post-Maoist Pop paintings that adhere to Western formal preferences and to an ideological view of China still locked in cold war formulas. Most of the painters whose work sold at auction have been producing the same images for 20 years. Mr. Huang, restlessly moving among themes and forms, has not. His art is about change, and it changes, and changes again. Duchamp and Cage, those adepts of Taoist modernism, would surely have understood this. And they might have recognized Mr. Huang for what he is: not one of the crouching tigers of the new Chinese art, but one of its hidden dragons.

**New York Times Published: April 14, 2006**



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## Huang Yong Ping

by Francine Koslow Miller

Huang Yong Ping is arguably one of China's pre-eminent contemporary artists, and this first retrospective dedicated to his career from 1985 to the present combines irony with humour, politics with spirit-uality, Yin with Yang. Although Huang permanently left his home (where he was the established leader of a small avant-garde group known as Xiamen Dada) for Paris in 1989, his creative methodology remains firmly rooted in his Chinese identity. 'House of Oracles: A Huang Yong Ping Retrospective', organized by Walker Art Center curators Philippe Verne and Doyen Chon and currently at Mass MoCA, is grounded in Tao, Chan (Zen), Chinese medicine and legend, and belief in the ancient prognosticative I Ching, the Book of Changes. Huang's consistent questioning of the hierarchies of language, art, history and politics is equally mediated, however, by Western influences including Ludwig Wittgenstein, Michel Foucault, Joseph Beuys, John Cage and Marcel Duchamp. In fact it is the collision between ancient beliefs (China) and new knowledge (the West) that drives Huang's art.

Visitors passed into the Huang retrospective via one of two intersecting passageways, each partially blocked by a cage containing pungent lion dung and lion food. Above each entry were signs reminiscent of a passport control point, reading 'Nationals' and 'Others'. No matter where they entered, viewers were subjected first to the overwhelming stench and then to over 45 marvellous works, including early paintings created by chance operations, documents of radical Dada performances, diagrams, sculptural objects and site-specific installations designed to provoke, critique and confound. A fold-out 'Travel Guide to Huang Yong Ping' included in the beautiful and informative exhibition catalogue shows the works in relationship to four major themes: chance, clash, colonialism/imperialism and Taoism.

Kitchen (1987) stood out among other early works based on chance and process. A raw canvas left on a kitchen wall for over six months became gradually overlaid with rich patterns of dust and traces of greasy smoke. This was shown together with a tool used in an impressive 'splatter and drip' painting – a teakettle placed on a traditional Chinese ceramic stove.

The History of Chinese Painting and the History of Modern Western Art Washed in the Washing Machine for Two Minutes (1987–93) represents the concept of clashing cultural collisions. An indecipherable mound of pulp created by blending the pulverized laundered remains of two art history books – Wang Bomin's History of Chinese Painting (1982) and Herbert Read's A Concise History of Modern Painting (1959) (the first history of modern Western art to be translated into Chinese) – balances on a pane of broken glass sitting on a Chinese tea box. Cleaning up untidy pasts and mutually exclusive systems of linear historical thought can evidently lead to a chaotic obliteration of the neat hierarchies of knowledge.

The House of Oracles (1989–92), placed in the sphere of Taoism, investigates the militant and aesthetic aspects of the avant-garde by creating a working studio within a tent. Inside, various instruments of divination, including a 'weapon' made of ground books glued to



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a metal bar, and large carved-wood roulette calendars suggest both military and artistic strategies. Outside, two sawhorses confront each other; metal plates atop each bear inscriptions of the result of an I Ching divination performed to predict the outcome of the first Persian War.

A series of sculptures dealing with issues of colonialism and imperialism was dominated by *Bank of Sand/Sand of Bank* (2000–6), a 20-ton scale replica of a structure in Shanghai that, since its construction in 1923, has embodied the various powerful entities of the day – from the headquarters of the British Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation to the Communist Municipal People’s Government Building to the current free-market Pudong Development Bank. Composed of sand and small amounts of concrete, Huang’s ‘castle in the sand’ representation of political, financial or state control made manifest is in a permanent state of disintegration, demonstrating that no reality lasts for ever.

*Bat Project IV* (2000–5), the last of a series of controversial re-creations of a section of the American spy plane that collided with a Chinese jet fighter in 2001, confronts recent geopolitical events with a Surrealist twist; the work includes an unlikely canopy of stuffed bats. But I prefer those of Huang’s works that demonstrate the timeless and basic animal nature of conflict between different groups. *Theatre of the World* (1993), a turtle-shaped cage containing live tarantulas, scorpions, millipedes, geckos, crickets and small snakes, is a miniature gladiators’ arena for a Darwinian battle of survival. This enduring Taoist demonstration of non-intervention (albeit in a contrived situation of his own creation) is at the core of Huang’s vision.

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## HYP IN VENICE

by Mathieu Borysevicz

As the war in Kosovo was coming to a close, the last Venice Biennale of the century was opening its doors. By its sheer proximity and inherent agenda of ethnic antagonism, the conflict in Kosovo informed not only the spirit and content, of the 48<sup>th</sup> Biennale, but also the degree of intensity with which art, seemingly attempted to bridge the divisions of culture and ethnicity.

Guided by curator Harald Szeemann's extraordinarily grand theme of "dAPERTutto" or "APPERTO over all" - an utopian agenda that encouraged openness, freedom, and a certain shift to the peripheries- those who hitherto had spoken with an alternative voice were called up to the front and center. This Biennale's general scheme of inclusiveness and its deliberate attempt to denationalize itself, invited all the blurry configurations recently undertaken by globalism in the arts to blossom in full.

Szeemann's "dAPERTutto" formed an irregular, albeit colorful weave of contemporary cultural production which was most prominent in the Italian pavilion and the newly reclaimed space of the Arsenale. However by far the bravest display of multiculturalism manifested itself in the French pavilion. France, seemingly a bastion of cultural purity went fiercely against the grain and choose to exhibit, alongside painter Jean Pierre Bertrand, Huang Yong Ping, a Paris based, but China born conceptual artist. What ensued was a discourse that while harmonious was dominated by the latter's dramatic muse on the inadequacy of a "national art" in the ambitious project - "Nine Animals, One Man". Huang Yong Ping's installation beautifully synchronized site with specificity of context, to "emphasize the paradox of Culture" and "reconstruct an open space where shifting identities can be played out."

"Nine Animals, One Man" consists of nine natural wood pillars positioned in a loosely formed queue. Starting from the rear of the pavilion at a height of 15 meters the columns proceed one by one, becoming gradually shorter through the entrance with the two shortest ones standing out in front of the pavilion itself. The columns pierce the pavilion's roof and lodge themselves into its floor as if unexpectedly plunging down from the sky. The effect is almost pure Hollywood in its theatricality. Huang's columns navigate through the pavilion at once acknowledging and countering the staid symmetry of its design. Atop each column, as if poised in mid-stride, are perched the nine imaginary beasts of the Shanhaijing from The Book of Mountains and Seas which is devoted to Chinese mythology. Coming from distant lands each of these species deliver a different prediction of the fate of the world.



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Facing this procession of fantastical beasts on the ground before the pavillion is a lone character pointing in amazement at the forthcoming stampede. The One Man , as denoted in the piece's title, stands atop an idle Compass Chariot, the traditional Chinese tool for measuring time and direction. This lone figure , presumably the artist himself, heroically confronts the convoluted situation of culture at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Beginning with a direct attack on the architectural authority of the pavilion itself and the edifice's embodiment of Nationalist self-consciousness, Huang's piece performs as a metaphoric conduit. The hybrid beasts connote a homogenizing global culture whereas the broken Compass Chariot signifies the end of the millennium, void of any discernible ideology. The contradictory omens that each of these fantastical beasts are said to deliver is but a subtext to the mythic sense of chaos created by the haunting scale of the columns themselves. The piece pierces and stretches through the pavilion- eventually looking back on itself in paralyzed astonishment.

From the outset Huang Yong Ping's oeuvre was defined by the breaches and bridges between Eastern and Western thought. Huang's efforts to negotiate between cultures was consummated early on in his "The History of Chinese Painting and A Concise History of Modern Painting Washed in a Washing Machine for Two Minutes", 1987 . Equally under the influences of Dada and Daoism, Huang compounds the quintessential doctrines of Eastern and Western high art. It was a gesture that he continues to re-explore to this day.

Since 1989 Huang Yong Ping has been living in Paris and experiencing cultural differences first hand. Huang's strategy often employs full fledged exoticism to "interrupt a dominant (Western) discourse". It is a tactic which, by introducing an iconography alien to the majority of the audience, sets a myriad of identity issues into play.

This continued use of a symbolism that is exhumed from the archives of an ancient civilization is questionable in both its integrity and leverage. It also helps to index certain phenomena in the contemporary arts worthy of inquiry. The use of explicitly eastern historical motifs, which some may argue have as little to do with contemporary Chinese life as they have with contemporary Western life, are employed by not only Huang Yong Ping but also by several other 'Chinese' artists who share similar backgrounds. Huang, along with Xu Bing, Cai Guoqiang Chen Zhen, Gu Wenda, Ai Weiwei, and Wang Du amongst others, have all resided outside the P.R.C. for over a decade. Each has achieved momentous prestige within the international art world by unrelentlessly referencing ancient Chinese civilization. Whether this is a defensive manoeuvre to counteract the dominant discourse, or a condescending attempt to accomodate an audience with an appetite for the exotic, this phenomenon certainly indexes the state of convolution traversed by contemporary world culture.

On a similar note, Huang Yongping belongs to a category of international artists whose practices are increasingly distanced from the



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sanctuary of the studio. Instead, new works are conceived specifically, and installed accordingly at each new site. His goofy “Peril de Mouton” at the Foundation Carter, concerning the mad cow crisis in Europe; VOC , originally made and shown in Amsterdam (also currently showing in Venice) re-examining Dutch colonialism , or Da Xian, The Doomsday, created for the occasion of Hong Kong’s return to the mainland all exemplify this trend . These globe trotting art-world superstars, equipped with large budgets, have turned the notion of artistic production into an enterprise wich is as ephemeral as it is extravagant.

Concurrent with the steady rise of this production has been the decentralization of the art world’s focus of attention towards the periferic “Other”. As the economies of the “developing nations’ have strengthened so have their art industries, producing exciting domestic scenes which are rapidly ‘absorbed’ and disseminated along the international circuit, often assuming quite different connotations. One of the questions arising from the last Venice Biennale of the century is whether this kind of art will eventually find a way back home and be conceived and viewed within the same cultural framework while still mantaining momentous ‘international’ significance.

**From New Art Media**