



CCQ
a creative conversation

**Luc Tuymans | Manifesta 12 | Riga Biennial | Anna Bella Geiger | N. S. Harsha
Werner Büttner | Ištvan Išt Huzjan | Nathaniel Rackowe | Darn Thorn | Zoe Preece**



Hope and Light Comforted my Heart

For Manifesta 12, Taiwanese artist Yahon Chang is presenting multiple large-scale ink paintings in the exhibition *Poetry of the Flow*, curated by Maria Rus Bojan. Using traditional Chinese ink painting techniques in a less than traditional, highly physical manner, Yahon commits body and soul to painting. Here the artist tells CCQ about his work drive and motivation.



As a student, I never did well academically, but I could paint and draw. I got into art school in Taiwan to study interior design, lighting design and architecture. When I finished college, I started a construction company. At the age of 42 though, when business was booming, I suddenly became very ill and I couldn't walk properly. I felt this heavy, heavy grief. I stopped work immediately and went abroad for a while, and I started painting. When I first painted, I did not stop for three days and nights. After

this marathon session, I found that my illness had been healed. So, ever since then, for the last 30 years, I have not stopped painting. I have to paint every day, for at least three hours, otherwise I will get sick again.

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Painting is like exercise to me, I sweat a lot, and I cry too (I need to change my shirt at least every 30 minutes!) I have a wooden chair and a wooden bed in my studio, so I can take a nap if I need to.

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I make the materials I use to paint – the brushes are of my own design and the rice paper I make is four times thicker than regular paper, so it doesn't break, as my way of painting is very physical.

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Not so long ago, I was a devoted Buddhist, I almost became a monk. But, in 2000, my wife passed away. The Buddhist monks could not give me the support that I needed at the time, when I was at my very lowest. Around then, I walked by a church; I went in, on my *(cont.)*



44 (2/2016)
Poetry of the Film (installation details),
Yuhon Chung, 2016 ink, ricepaper and
sui shiki, dimension various photos,
Lanz 2th East



own, and sat there listening to the hymns. Hope and light comforted my heart, so I went back there every week for 10 years, just to listen.

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I have some Christian friends, who comforted and supported my children and me, when we were grieving and in so much pain. Eventually we converted to Christianity because of the care that we got from them. Any time I feel grief, my faith allows me to refocus and make better decisions in every area of my life. As I sit quietly in my studio, I calm down, the spirit of God fills me and I receive inspiration; I know what to paint.

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I own a tea place, a cafe, in Taiwan. It's a social platform, a place to make friends; there is a close relationship between tea ceremonies, traditional calligraphy, philosophy and Buddhism. For me it's a place to go with my friends, rather than a nightclub or strip club, which is the norm in the business world in Taiwan. I grew up in a family where there has long been a tradition of enjoying tea. I am making my own tea now, and my tea place has become a tourist destination in its own right. My work, which is shown at museums and major biennials around the world, seems to touch others; this has come of something of a surprise to me. When I came to Palermo, three weeks ago, to make the work for my Manifesta presentation, I noticed there are many different ethnicities living side by side quite happily, and people here have generally been very friendly. I also noticed there are serious immigration and refugee issues; these are groups of people that need much more attention from us. I painted a picture of refugees on a boat, floating on the ocean, when I got here.

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The faces that I paint are faces of abandonment. Some of the faces are reflections of the unhappy people I see in business and politics, people obsessively competing with one another. I paint them with unhappy animal faces, turning them into dogs, monkeys and cats.

(with many thanks to Yahon Chang's interpreter)

*Yahon Chan, Poetry of the Flow, curated by Maria Rus Bojan, is showing at Sala delle Armi, Palazzo Chiamomonte-Steri, Piazza Marina 61, 90133, Palermo, Italy until 19 August 2018, as a collateral event to Manifesta 12
manifesta.org*





