

GALERIE JEANNE-BUCHER

GALERIE JAEGER BUCHER

PRESS PACK

YANG JIECHANG

Tale of the 11th day



Two-part exhibition

Opening I

Thursday 13th October 2011 from 6pm to 9pm

GALERIE JEANNE-BUCHER

53 rue de Seine 75006 Paris

Opening II

Thursday 20th October 2011 from 6pm to 10pm

GALERIE JAEGER BUCHER

5 & 7 rue de Saintonge 75003 Paris

«everything should be led back to nature, should be reduced to a free state of mind, and should be traced back to the self.»

Yang Jiechang



Detail *Stranger than paradise*, 2010-2011. Ink and mineral colors on silk mounted on canvas (panels 1 and 2/7) each panel 112,20 x 57,09 inches, 285 x 145 cm

YANG JIECHANG

Tale of the 11th day

October 13 - November 26, 2011

Opening Thursday 13th October 2011 from 6pm to 9pm

GALERIE JEANNE-BUCHER

53 rue de Seine 75006 Paris

October 20 - December 30, 2011

Opening Thursday 20th October 2011 from 6pm to 10pm

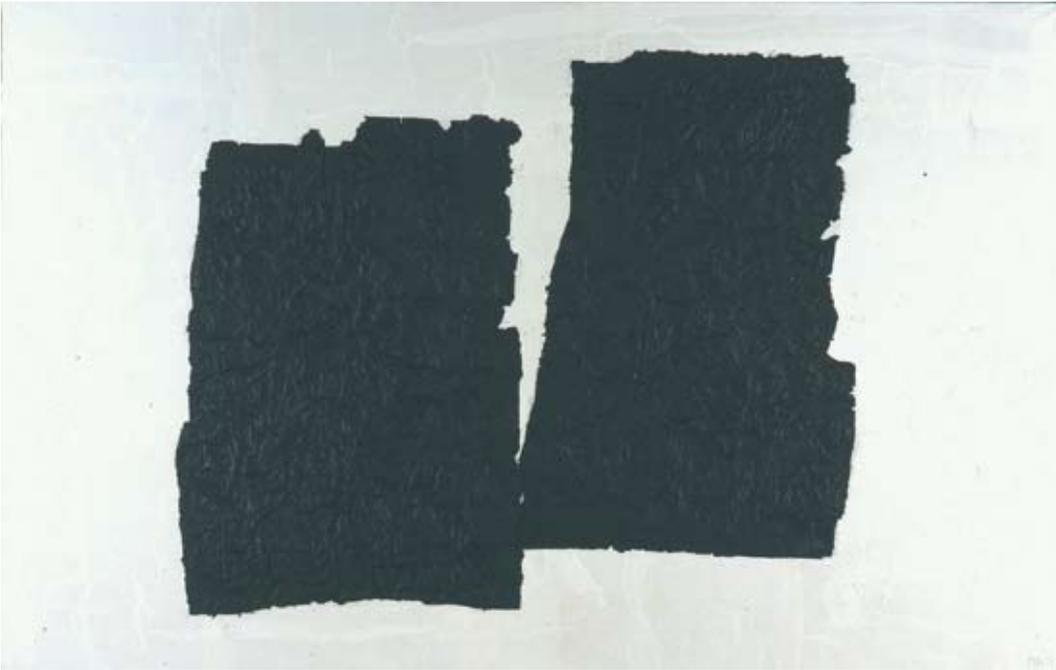
GALERIE JAEGER BUCHER

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Following Yang Jiechang's solo exhibition "*On Ascension*" at the gallery in 2008, we are pleased to present this coming autumn a **two-part exhibition by the artist entitled "*Tale of the 11th day*" in our two Paris spaces, left bank and right bank**. The two-part exhibition mark our commitment to an artist whose work we have been following **for over 20 years**. The first opening in the Galerie Jeanne-Bucher space **on the left bank** will take place on **Thursday 13 October** and will present a selection of exceptional paintings from the 1990s including the *100 Layers of Ink* series. A second opening will be held on **Thursday 20 October** in the Galerie Jaeger Bucher's new space **on the right bank**, as part of the evening opening organised by the galleries in the Marais during the FIAC art fair and will present the artist's latest series of works entitled *Stranger than Paradise*.

The artist's life and work

Yang Jiechang was born in 1956 in Foshan in southern China where he lived until 1978. He was deeply affected by the Cultural Revolution proclaimed by Mao Zedong in 1966. He takes part in the mass movement by joining the red guards in the 1970s and studying calligraphy "*having in view a participation in a critique of the class enemies during the Cultural Revolution*". He quickly distanced himself, deciding to study Chinese art history theory at the Canton Fine Arts Academy where he was also trained in the traditional art of ink painting. His considerable mastery of calligraphy and acute knowledge of traditional Chinese thinking could have sufficed for Yang Jiechang, but he decided nonetheless to be initiated over a period of several years into Taoism and Zen Buddhism which proved vital for the development of his formal language reduced to the essential. He emerged from this period firmly convinced that "traditional expression" in no way depends on a fixed form but resides in daily actions that evolve ad infinitum.



100 layers of ink, 1991
Ink on paper
mounted on canvas.
61 x 96,46 inches
155 x 245 cm

“*The real has no form*”—this seems to be a leitmotiv for a body of work that has been developing for more than thirty years, sustained by life and the accumulated experiences of life, sensations, knowledge and wisdom which are perpetually changing and necessarily moving as time is passing; and whether Yang Jiechang has recourse to calligraphy and traditional silk painting, or video, photography and performance using sound, music and multimedia, all constantly renewed, this is what his body of work translates as it reflects the sensations and events from life.

«*LES MAGICIENS DE LA TERRE*»: AFTER THE EXHIBITION

Yang Jiechang’s work was shown outside China for the first time in the 1990s, when he became known for the series of works entitled *One Hundred Layers of Ink* (1989-1999) which were shown by Jean-Hubert Martin in the exhibition «*Les Magiciens de la Terre*» at the Pompidou Centre. It was at this time that the artist settled in Paris and married German art critic Martina Köppel, thus moving frequently between France and Germany. The following decade saw him pursue his work on the powerfully introspective *One Hundred Layers of Ink* series, applying layers and layers of ink on rice paper, he created a kind of mental landscape built from simple black forms, rough and elegant, void and full, contemplative and dynamic at the same time. One is confronted with the traces of the process of self-sublimation, which sets free the potential to precise action and intervention.



100 layers of ink – E.Coli, 1990
China Ink on rice paper.
95,67 x 49,21 inches, 243 x 125 cm



St-Arbre-Feu blanc, 2009-2010
Ink and mineral colours on silk mounted on canvas.
34,25 x 60,24 inches, 87 x 153 cm.

This internationally acknowledged series was followed by a creative period in which his interest switched from contemplation to intervention and participation. Yang Jiechang endeavoured to question both social and political events of today's societies, as well as those of his own life as a Eurasian artist constantly working between Europe and Asia.

PARADISE ACCORDING TO YANG JIECHANG

Entitled *Stranger than Paradise*, the latest series of works to be shown at the gallery, furthers the artist exploration and questioning of our global world, calling into question the notions of control and instability that rule our collective systems of life. Basing his thinking on the idea that, in a media-dominated world where life has become unreal and fictional, authenticity has become a rare commodity, Yang Jiechang imagines “a landscape for a return to Nature” that he locates in Paradise.

By calling the exhibition «*Tale of the 11th Day*», Yang Jiechang deliberately **extends the 10th day of Boccaccio's Decameron** with his paradise landscape. In the medieval tales, ten characters have fled the plague, taking refuge in the countryside where everything seems idyllic, an earthly Eden out of time and reality. For the amusement of all, each person must relate one tale every night.

Nature is omnipresent in the narratives, viewed as a protective universe where everyone can find peace of mind, a universe that contrasts strongly with the plague-ridden atmosphere of the city.

On this 11th day, Yang Jiechang paints a paradise for us, where all divides, whether religious, ethnic, ideological or political, have disappeared, and with them the conflicts and wars that tear societies apart. “*The choice to represent animals with their mutual feelings, inclinations and loves, was made in order to eliminate any ideological approach or form of -ism. It's a very strange scene. In real life,*



Details - *Stranger than paradise*, 2010-2011
work reproduced p.6

this type of situation seems improbable, even impossible. That's why I placed it in Paradise" Yang Jiechang tells us.

Here, people and animals frolic quite freely, reminding us that on the one hand humans may well be animals that have evolved, but that today they have become *unnatural*. Myths and legends, ancient narratives, the history of art, religion and customs and popular beliefs all relate stories of animals that have been a part of human history, accompanying our development.

FINDING NATURE WITHIN

The *Stranger than Paradise* series seems to force us not to remain just at the appearances level, or in simple formal terms, the mating of men and beasts. The paintings' **provocative character** perhaps fosters an awareness that **our profound nature, our true humanity lies in our animality (not bestiality)**: an animality of the heart that beats to the unity of Creation in all its forms.

If we wish to understand our nature as humankind, maybe we should accept our animal nature, love it and be one with it so that we are no longer *unnatural* but one with Creation in all its forms.

Perhaps finding Nature within ourselves will once more open the gates of instinct and reveal portals leading to a future ... a future that is human at last.

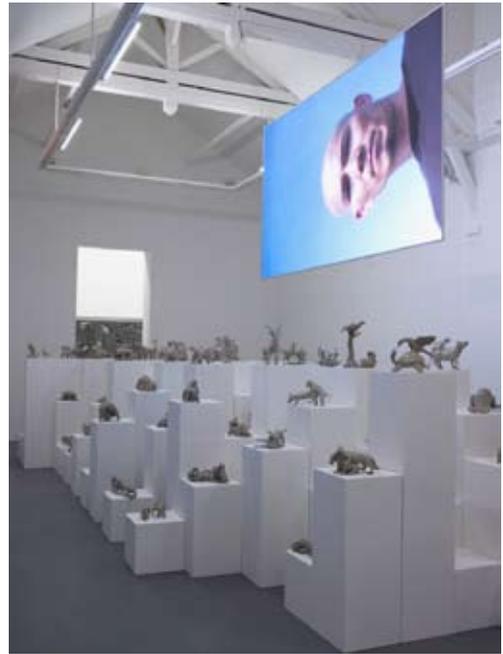


Detail - *Stranger than paradise 2*, 2010-2011



Stranger than paradise 2, 2010-2011
Ink and mineral colors on silk mounted on canvas. 57,09 x 177,17 inches, 145 x 450 cm.

The works that compose the *Stranger than paradise* series convoke traditional Chinese aesthetics and culture but using diverse techniques that are adapted for contemporary purposes: paintings on silk, some of which are designed as screens, forcing the viewers to observe from the outside as if reminding them that they are not part of the landscape they see. The installation with traditionally made ceramics encourages viewers to walk through the same paradise landscape for which the artist has provided a third dimension.



View of the exhibition *Stranger than Paradise*, 2011. Installation coproduced with the Galerie Jaeger Bucher and the Centre d'Art contemporain La Criée, Rennes.

It should be noted that **one of the masterpieces from this series is a painting over 10 metres long (which took Yang Jiechang over a year to complete) and has been presented at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice since early June in the exhibition curated by Caroline Bourgeois entitled «Le Monde vous appartient (The World Belongs to You)».**



Stranger than paradise, 2010-2011. Ink and mineral colors on silk mounted on canvas. 112,20 X 399,61 inches, 285 X 1015 cm, each panel 112,20 X 57,09 inches, 285 X 145 cm

Further, our gallery recently coproduced the three dimensional installation of the same series which was exhibited in the **Art Center in Rennes La Criée** last May, made up of 200 sculptures set on plinths of differing heights, representing animals in mating positions. Each couple represents two different species facing their physical incongruities (an elephant and a tiger, a wolf and a monkey, a stork and a puma ...), while providing visitors with the possibility of living the landscape and the various elements within the painting. A video accompanies this sculpture landscape: called *Gong*, it shows the artist striking a bronze gong with his head, suggesting another landscape that unfolds within his head.

RETREATING AND PARTICIPATING: A HOLISTIC VIEW OF THE WORLD

The gallery exhibition extends and completes the two initial presentations with the very latest works by the artist on the theme *Stranger than Paradise*.

The two-part exhibition will reveal a dual movement that is ever-present in Yang Jiechang's work: one of **sublimation, immobility and introspection** as seen in the *One Hundred Layers of Ink* series that recovered its unified nature through sublimation, and then, in the *Stranger than Paradise* series, the alternate movement of **provocation, fecundation and participation**, fostering union with the multiple forms in our nature through self-surpassing. Whatever path is taken, whether the formless, monochrome, repetitive paintings from the 90s or the latest figurative series, coloured and teeming with life, the question is one of a holistic view of humankind seen either from within oneself or from without self-surpassing.

These two forms of self-expression, using fundamentally different techniques, demonstrate **Jiechang's interest in the relationship of the Confucian intellectuals to the State and their attitude towards politics.**

Yang Jiechang comments on this fundamental questions in this manner: *«I very much appreciate the ideas of self-sublimation and engagement developed by Chinese literati. They developed the possibility and the personal condition to both retire and attack. I also like their concept of artistic practice: they create art to cultivate their character and refine taste ; If you look at the works of high scholars you can feel their degree of self-sublimation. In Confucianism, what I'm especially interested in are those elements of Tao origin such as the idea that everything should be led back to nature, should be reduced to a free state of mind, and should be traced back to the self. It was in this manner that the participation in public life of traditional intellectuals were able to influence political choices »*. He adds : *«I feel that contemporary art today is often too much motivated by particular purposes and many intellectuals or artists have forgotten how to retreat to their own position after having had success and having been the focus of the media»*.

The presentation of the two-part exhibition shows Yang Jiechang's ability to alternately summon forth self-sublimation or active participation through works that are both traditional and yet completely of their time from the point of view of composition and the ideas they convey. By imagining a 10th Day for Boccaccio's Decameron, Yang Jiechang has fundamentally gone back to the great Confucian scholars who thought their own ideals more important than any political system. He immerses us in a Paradise where all nature's creations seem to live together in peace.

**THE DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES USED
IN THE *ONE HUNDRED LAYERS OF INK* SERIES
IN THE GALLERY SPACE, RUE DE SEINE**

These works were made on Xuan rice paper by building up successive layers of black ink obtained by distilling cypress wood charcoal and essential oils. They materialise dense, stratified monochromes with subtle variations in light according to what extent the paper absorbs or reverberates it, and also how densely the layers of ink are superimposed.

In this series, the **repeated gestures and successive layerings of ink** are pushed to the extreme, thus demystifying Chinese painting and providing viewers with an **intense physical and spiritual apprehension of the work**.

But beyond any surpassing of traditional Chinese techniques, the works also generate random folds in the material thus lending it topographical sensitivity with suggestions of brilliance in certain areas and organically corporeal allusions in others.



100 Layers of Ink – On Ascension, 1990
China Ink on rice paper. 116,54 x 74,80 inches, 296 x 190 cm

Gradually, line traces seem to emerge within the brilliant reliefs, not through any differences in ink density but through a special treatment of the sheets of Chinese paper. These are worked on when wet, folded or shaped, alternating between a form of writing, a landscape, a 'vanitas' or a part of the body. Large black shapes also gradually appear, standing out from a white background achieved by juxtaposing Korean rice paper and white gauze. Some smaller



Sans titre, 1991. Soja sauce on paper. 11,69 x 16,54 inches, 29,7 x 42 cm

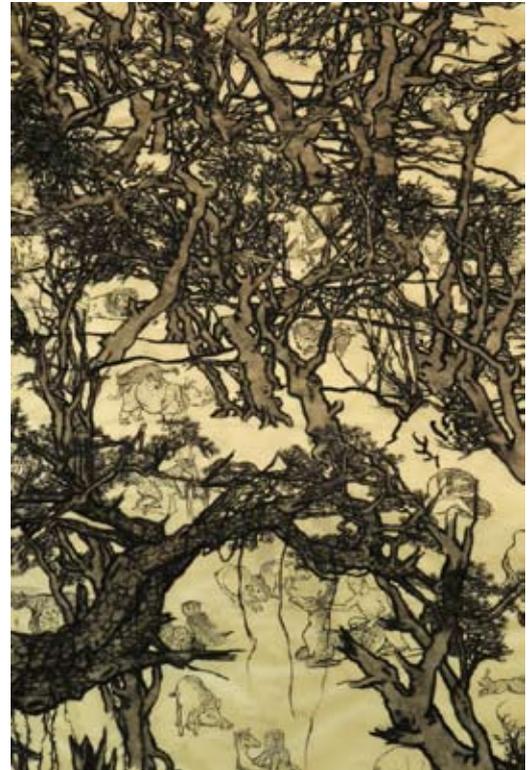
works may also be done using soja ink. All this work to our mind belongs to the artist's most introspective period, to the image of the self-sublimating process achieved through a state of meditation.

**THE DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES USED
IN THE *STRANGER THAN PARADISE MOUNTAIN TOP* SERIES
IN THE GALLERY SPACE, RUE DE SAINTONGE**

The works forming the *Stranger than Paradise* series are paintings done using the traditional Chinese technique known as “meticulous painting” which can take months to perform. The method is similar in technique to Western wash drawing.

The China Ink drawing is first applied to the silk (or rice paper); being indelible on silk, it is important for it to be accurate from the outset. When the ink drawing is dry, multiple layers of colour are then built up. The under layers of the painting mainly require vegetable colours, while for the over layers the colours are mineral.

The process is repeated until the desired effect of tone is achieved, given that the final touches of colour are only applied once the silk has been mounted.



Detail - work in progress, 2011

The final effect of the paintings, painstakingly done, shows a great subtlety and depth in the layers built up with total mastery of this technique.



Yang Jiechang in his studio, 2011

The ceramic sculptures which form the *Stranger than Paradise Mountain Top* series were made in Guangdong province in the city of Foshan, renowned for its blue and grey crazed glazes. Models for the 100 sculptures were made in clay.

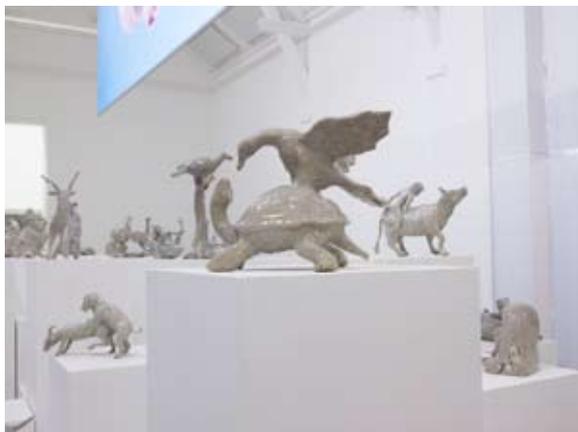
These were moulded and ceramic paste applied by hand inside the moulds. When the ceramics were dry, a thick glaze was applied. They were then placed in a kiln and heated to 1250 degrees causing the glazes to craze more or less finely according to the firing.



clay sculpture, 2011



ceramic sculpture, 2011



View of the exhibition *Stranger than Paradise*, 2011. Installation coproduced with the Galerie Jaeger Bucher and the Centre d'Art contemporain La Criée, Rennes.

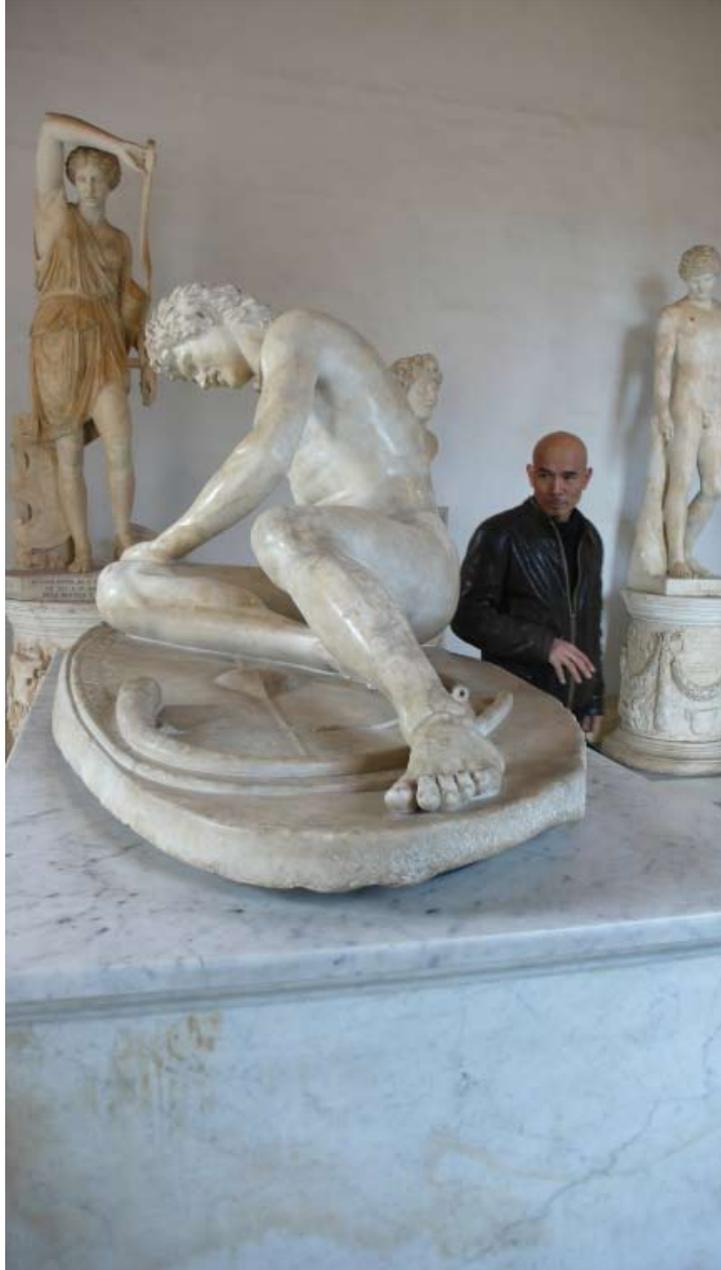


View of the exhibition *Stranger than Paradise*, 2011. Installation coproduced with the Galerie Jaeger Bucher and the Centre d'Art contemporain La Criée, Rennes.

UNDER PUBLICATION

BILINGUAL CATALOGUE with colour plates.

Essays by: Larys FROGIER, Director of the Centre d'Art Contemporain La Criée in Rennes,
Paul GLADSTON, Professor of Critical Theory and Visual Culture at the University of Nottingham,
Lothar LEDDEROSE, Professor of Art History at the University of Heidelberg, specialist in the art of Asia,
recipient of the Balzan prize in 2005.



Portrait of Yang Jiechang. Photo Martina Köppel.

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« 100 Layers of Ink – On Ascension », 1990
Ink on rice paper. 116,54 x 74,80 inches, 296 x 190 cm



« Minuit dans la forêt I » 2002
Acrylic and ink on China paper
mounted on wood.
70,67 x 37,99 inches, 179,5 x 96,5 cm



« The wind is rising, the white
sun declines » 1985. Ink on paper,
53,94 x 26,50 inches, 137 x 67,5 cm



« 100 layers of ink » 1990-91
Ink on paper mounted on canvas. 61 x 96,46 inches, 155 x 245 cm

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St-Arbre-Feu blanc, 2009-2010
Ink and mineral colors on silk
mounted on canvas.
34,25 x 60,24 inches, 87 x 153 cm
Photo Jean-Louis LOSI



Stranger than paradise 2, 2010-2011
Ink and mineral colors on silk
mounted on canvas.
57,09 x 177,17 inches, 145 x 450 cm
Photo Gautier DEBLONDE



Detail - *Stranger than paradise 1*, 2010-2011
Ink and mineral colors on silk mounted on canvas.
98,82 x 362,2 inches. 251 x 920 cm
Photo Jean-Louis LOSI

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Details - *Stranger than paradise*, 2010-2011.
Ink and mineral colors on silk mounted on canvas.
112,20 x 399,61 inches, 285 x 1015 cm,
Photos Gautier DEBLONDE
work fully reproduced page 6



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