

# YANG JIECHANG

## *Dark Writings*

30 years of collaboration with the galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger

November 30th, 2019 - February 1st, 2020

Jeanne Bucher Jaeger | Paris, Marais

Opening on Saturday November 30th, 4pm-7pm, with the artist



*Mustard Seed Garden - Young Man with Leopard*, 2014-2016, ink and mineral colours on silk mounted on canvas, 150 x 140 cm, Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris

*In April 1984, I visited the venerable Huangtao, one of the eminent masters of the Quanzhen school of Daoism from the south. I had read so many ancient texts, I had put so much hope and passion into following Master Huangtao's teaching. I had a letter of recommendation with me, I suffered a whole day of shaking on a rickety bus, I climbed the mountain. I discovered a simple and modest man who seemed to blend in with the crowd. A prominent Qigong Master, Yan Yin, had come from Beijing to visit Master Huangtao. They drank a light tea, visited the Daoist temple together and then took a walk in the mountains. Nothing more than that. I had lost all illusions about the scope of their conversation.*

*However, as time passes, I am more and more aware that I have been deeply affected. I have retained a spiritual benefit from the encounter for my entire life. It has been said: the real is formless.*

*In one sip I empty my glass of clear water to stop writing words...*

Yang Jie-Chang, catalogue of the exhibition *Yang Jie-Chang* at the galerie Jeanne Bucher, April 23 - May 30, 1992.

To celebrate **30 years of collaboration with Yang Jiechang**, the gallery is pleased to present the exhibition *Dark Writings*, in conjunction with the major retrospective entitled *Three Souls and Seven Spirits* at the **Shanghai Minsheng Art Museum**, from November 6, 2019 to February 9, 2020. The gallery, a partner in the exhibition, is also participating for the first time in the **West Bund Art & Design Shanghai**, November 7-10 2019, with a dialogue between the works of Mark Tobey (1890-1976) and Yang Jiechang (born in 1956).

Two artists supported by the gallery for years. Two parallel artistic paths between East and West. Mark Tobey, from Wisconsin, whose artistic journey is closely linked to his spiritual evolution. His encounter with the Baha'i faith, his travels to the Far East and his contacts with Zen are decisive in his work as well as in the creation of his *White Writing*. This series, partly exhibited in Shanghai, echoes Yang Jiechang's *Dark Writings* exhibition in Paris given at the same time, presenting some twenty works from different creative periods representing the artist's entire career.

Originally from Foshan, a Buddhist, Daoist and Confucian city in southern China, Yang Jie-Chang lived there until the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1978. In 1970, he joined the Red Guards, which he finally left to train in traditional Chinese calligraphy between 1974 and 1978 at the Institute of Folk Art in Foshan, and from 1978 on at the Academy of Fine Arts in Guangzhou, where he acquired a great mastery of calligraphy and ink painting. The year 1982 was marked by his life-changing encounter with the priest Huangtao who introduced him to the Way of the Dao. *From that moment on, I entered a grey and black world.* From that moment on, he also chose to change his name to Yang Jiechang— *“he who asks to heaven.”* The way of the Dao is an act of creation in its own right, far from any ideology, rather favoring a primordial availability. The artist said in 1991: *“I hope that my daily life will become more and more a meditation. That's why, when I paint, I don't paint. My paintings are not paintings. My ideal would be to keep them away from any trace of paint.”*

His friendship with the art critic Hou Hanrou opened the doors of the West to him: in 1989 the artist was presented by Jean-Hubert Martin in the exhibition *Les Magiciens de la Terre* at the **Centre Pompidou**. *“We had the good fortune to discover Yang Jie-Chang in Les Magiciens de la Terre, in which his work seemed to us the most disturbing element,”* said **Jean-François Jaeger, who exhibited Yang's work for the first time at the 1989 FIAC**, then devoted a first solo exhibition to him at the gallery in 1991. Since then, the Jeanne Bucher Jaeger Gallery has presented his work in numerous solo and group exhibitions (the last one in 2016 on the occasion of the artist's 60th birthday) and has supported his work in exhibitions within international institutions.

*“Yang Jiechang's work avidly seeks out permanent openings that allow contact zones, frictions, and debates of ideas, but never in the spirit of nihilism, destruction or oppression. His work is never imbued with a leveling and globalizing pluralism, but rather is filled with the constructive energies born from the uprisings of thought through images. To understand Yang Jiechang's work is simply to recognize how much the essence of his art focuses on a radical availability and a permanent openness to the unexpected, to accidents, to the living. This permanent state of creation observed in everyday life leads him to glimpse art in its possibilities of expansion but also of the power relations specific to creative risk-taking and the practices of freedom. Yang Jiechang's work is not a naive contemplation of the manifestations of the living, for the artist never hesitates to rub his works materially and formally against the signs of politics, the taboos of the body, eroticism, or death. Without any didactic, militant or voyeuristic inclination, Yang Jiechang's works point out the aberrations as well as the creative potential of our collective systems of living, both in the East and the West.”*

Larys Frogier, catalogue of the exhibition *Yang Jiechang - On Ascension*, galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, 2009



*Country of Movements*, 2019.  
Ink and acrylic on Xuan paper mounted on canvas,  
320 x 145 cm,  
Photo © Marc Domage,  
Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris

Yang Jiechang began his *Hundred Layers of Ink* in 1988, a series that he would work on for about ten years, followed by a series of more figurative works and, more recently, by the series of meticulous silk paintings in which Yang displays a tremendous mastery of technique. Proceeding by applying and covering successive layers of black ink on Xuan paper, the works bring into being dense, laminated monochromes, with subtle variations in light according to the paper's qualities of absorption and reflection, and the densities of superposition of ink layers. The artist is deeply convinced that a "traditional expression" does not depend on a fixed form but is rather generated by daily actions that evolve infinitely. Over the past thirty years, "The real is without form" seems to be the leitmotif at work in his creations, whether they be drawings, ink paintings, videos, performances, sculptures or installations.

*"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*, catalogue *Yang Jie Chang : No-Shadow Kick*, Shanghai / Duolun Museum of Modern Art – Tang Contemporary Art, 2008

Since 1989, Yang Jiechang has lived and worked between Paris, Heidelberg, Germany, and China, and has participated in numerous exhibitions at institutions around the world : *Les Magiciens de la terre* (Centre Pompidou, Paris, 1989), *Chine demain pour hier* (France, 1990), *Silent Energy* (Modern Art Oxford, 1993), *Shenzhen International Ink Biennial* (1998, 2000, 2002), *Pause - Gwanju Biennial* (South Korea, 2002), *Zone of Urgency - 50th Venice Biennial* (Venice, 2003), *the Guangzhou Triennial* (Guangzhou, China, 2003/2005), *La Force de l'Art - 1st Paris Triennial* (Paris, 2006), *the Liverpool Biennial* (Liverpool, 2007), *the Istanbul Biennial* (Istanbul, 2007), *the Moscow Biennial* (Moscow, 2009), *the French May* (Hong Kong, 2001/2015), *Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2014) *Carambolages* (Grand Palais, Paris, 2016), *The Street* (MAXXI, Rome, 2018), *Art and China after 1989: Theater of the World* (Guggenheim Museum, New York/ Bilbao/Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, 2017-2018).