

MASSIMODECARLO

YAN PEI-MING

A SHORT HISTORY OF POWER AND DEATH

Massimo De Carlo is pleased to present *A Short History of Power and Death*, a solo show by the Chinese artist, based in France, Yan Pei-Ming, with whom Massimo De Carlo has collaborated for almost 20 years, since 1998. This is Yan Pei-Ming's second exhibition at our South Audley Street gallery.

Yan Pei-Ming grew up during the Cultural Revolution in China and left Shanghai for France in 1980, where he studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Dijon. During the last 30 years Yan Pei-Ming has established himself as one of the most prominent artists, renowned for his epic sized portraits of key power figures from both the East and the West, from Mao Zedong and Barack Obama to Marilyn Monroe and Alexander McQueen.

A Short History of Power and Death presents three new series of paintings that investigate the relationship between authority and ego, mortality and gesture.

On the ground floor of the gallery there are six large-scale paintings of Napoleon crowning himself. Yan Pei-Ming was inspired by a drawing that hangs at the Louvre, a first draft by David of the painting the *Coronation of Napoleon*. By focusing on Napoleon's gesture alone, removing the Pope from the image, Yan Pei-Ming draws to our attention the arrogance and narcissism that can be generated by the possession of power. The series is influenced by Yan Pei-Ming's on-going interest in the behavioural patterns of authority and the contemporary perspective of historic events.

Upon entering the first room of the first floor the viewer encounters a blue still life painting in which flowers are placed next to a skull rolled to its side. The jewelled crown that covers and weighs down the skull, causing it to tumble, is the same as the one drawn in David's draft that Napoleon uses to crown himself. The crown, which Yan Pei-Ming had crafted by an artisan specifically to replicate it in this work, is an iconography of immortality and resurrection: this *vanitas* is a metaphor for the ephemerality of power.

On the first floor three different coloured canvases depict Jackson Pollock's upturned car on the side of the road at the site of the alcohol induced car crash that killed the artist in 1956. This trace of the iconic artist's death opens a narrative about the troubled relationship between fame, influence and decline. The other painting of the series is shown in the window.

In the basement a work composed by four dark canvases portray Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Bashar al-Assad and Kim Jong-un. The four political leaders are facing a large-scale canvas that depicts the execution of the Emperor Maximilian. The work is based on the painting by Edouard Manet that hangs at the National Gallery in London: after the artist's death the canvas was cut up into smaller fragments, some of which were sold separately. Edgar Degas eventually purchased all the surviving fragments and reassembled them on a single canvas.

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A Short History of Power and Death reflects on the gestures connected to power. Yan Pei-Ming portrays and captures on canvas moments, faces, objects and actions that have influenced our history – combining ritual and ferocity, political and ethereal. Each room creates a narrative that brings together past and present, the historical and the contemporaneous.

The exhibition is also an occasion to celebrate the launch on the first and definitive monograph of Yan Pei-Ming's work (272 pages). The book, published by Rizzoli International, has been edited and introduced by the internationally renowned curator Francesco Bonami and it features more than 1,500 images in combination with excerpts from interviews with the artists, exhibition catalogue essays, newspapers and journal articles, and exhibition reviews.

YAN PEI-MING

Yan Pei-Ming was born in Shanghai in 1960. He lives and works in Dijon (France). Yan Pei-Ming has had solo exhibitions at the Villa Medici, Rome; CAC Málaga, Malaga; Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing; Foundation Vincent Van Gogh, Arles; the San Francisco Art Institute; and the Musée du Louvre - The Funeral of Mona Lisa by Ming was shown in the room next to the original Mona Lisa. Group exhibitions include the Venice Biennale in 1995 and 2003; the Sevilla Biennale in 2006; the Istanbul Biennial in 2007, among others. Yan Pei Ming is collected by a number of prestigious institutions including the Centre Georges Pompidou; the Honolulu Museum of Art; the National Gallery of Australia; the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; the Museum Ludwig in Koln; and the Shanghai Art Museum in Shanghai.

Hard Facts:

Massimo De Carlo, London
55 South Audley Street
London W1K 2QH

From October 4th, 2017 until December 16th, 2017

Open Tuesday to Saturday, 10:00am – 6.00pm

Opening: Tuesday 3rd of October 2017, 6.00 to 8.00 pm

For further information and materials:

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