

Yue Minjun

Yue Minjun was born in 1962 in China. He is best known for oil paintings depicting himself in various settings, frozen in laughter. He has also reproduced this signature image in sculpture, watercolor and prints. While Yue is often classified as part of the Chinese "Cynical Realist" movement in art developed in China since 1989, Yue himself rejects this label, while at the same time "doesn't concern himself about what people call him."

Yue's father worked in the oil fields of northeast China, and he himself worked in China's oil industry, before beginning studies in art in 1983. In 1989, he was inspired by a painting by Geng Jianyi in the "China / Avant Garde" show in Beijing, which depicted Geng's own laughing face. Disillusioned with politics by the Tiananmen Square uprising of the same year, he moved to an artist's colony outside Beijing in 1990. His signature style developed out of portraits of his bohemian friends from the artists village, and soon became a popular investment for foreigners looking to capitalize on China's opening to the west.

He has shown work internationally in many exhibitions including the 5th Shanghai Biennale, Mahjon at Kunstmuseum Bern and Xianfeng! at Museum Beelden aan Zee in the Netherlands. He is represented by Art Beatus in Vancouver and Chinese Contemporary in Beijing and London. His piece 'Execution' became the most expensive work ever by a Chinese contemporary artist, when sold in 2007 for £2.9 million pounds (US \$5.9 million) at London's Sotheby's. Until its sale at Sotheby's Hong Kong in 2007, this painting had been owned by Trevor Simon, a junior investment banker who bought it with about a third of his salary while working in the region. Simon kept this painting in storage for 10 years as required by the conditions of sale. The record sale took place week after his painting 'Massacre of Chios' sold at the Hong Kong Sotheby's for nearly \$4.1 million. 'Massacre of Chios' shares its name with a painting of the same name, by Eugène Delacroix, depicting the 1822 event in Greek history.

Yue Minjun's first museum show in the United States took place at the Queens Museum of Art, Queens, New York. The show, Yue Minjun and the Symbolic Smile featured bronze and polychrome sculptures, paintings and drawings and ran from October 2007 to January 2008.

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