

Press release of 9 May 2014

Kwang-Ja Yang: «Tradition – Innovation»

In her painting Kwang-Ja Yang connects tradition and innovation as well as East and West. On the one side, this Swiss artist with Korean roots practises and teaches East Asian ink painting. On the other, she creates mixed media paintings that owe their expressiveness and surprising effects to an innovative combination of East Asian and Western European subjects, materials and techniques.

Kwang-Ja Yang lives and works in two worlds: In South Korea, the country of her childhood and youth, and in Europe, where she has also been at home for a long time. She learnt classical East Asian ink painting and calligraphy while still a child and has practised it ever since. Her expressive and harmonic works mostly depict elements of the landscape, as well as «the four noble ones»: Bamboo, plum blossom, the orchid and the chrysanthemum. In East Asia these plants are associated with a diversity of meanings and are important metaphors in painting and literature. The apparent simplicity of Yang's monochrome paintings almost leads one to forget how much practise, patience and respect for nature is required to comprehend the characters of these subjects and to capture them in a perceptible way on paper with brush and ink.

In the 1960s Kwang-Ja Yang came to Berlin to study fine art, art history and art education. At the same time she began to teach calligraphy and later also ink painting. While introducing her students to Korean art and culture, the synthesis between the two worlds in which she lived became central to her own work. Yang began to connect the subjects, materials and techniques of East Asian and European art in an innovative way and to experiment with the forms of expression that emerged. Among the results were expressive and almost abstract paintings of bamboo in various colours and styles, painted in ink, oils and egg tempera on Korean base paper. The areas of colour that converge with, and partly repel, each other reflect the tensions and fractures in the life of the artist, who is at home today in Zurich, Seoul and Ronchamp. Different mindsets enrich and inspire Yang. However, the meeting of two cultures also creates opposition and rejection. In her painting Kwang-Ja Yang not only maintains the balance between her worlds. She also builds bridges between East Asian and European art, which unite in her work in an impressive and moving way.

You and your friends are warmly invited to the exhibition preview on Thursday 22 May 2014, from 17.00 to 20.00. Kwang-Ja Yang will be present.

The exhibition «Tradition – Innovation» runs from 23 May 2014 to 12 July 2014.

At 13.00 on Sunday 1 June 2014 and Saturday 12 July 2014 (the closing event) Kwang-Ja Yang will give a performance and explain her working methods. Drinks and Korean specialities will follow.

Opening hours: Wednesday to Friday 12.30 to 18.00, Saturday 11.00 to 14.00, or by appointment. The gallery will be closed on Ascension Day (29 May 2014).

Further information available from:

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Kwang-Ja Yang

Career

Active as an independent artist since her youth

2000 – 2004	Course director, Museum Rietberg, Zurich (CH)
Since 1988	Leader of private courses in ink painting and calligraphy
1986 – 2004	Lecturer at the School of Art and Design Zurich (CH)
1982 – 1984	Study course in the East Asian art history, Zurich University (CH)
1980	Move to Switzerland
1978	Dissertation on museum art education, educational science faculty of the Freie Universität, West Berlin (DE)
Since 1976	Art teacher, course director, lecturer and workshop leader at various schools in Germany, Austria, South Korea and Switzerland
1973 – 1979	Art teacher training course, Hochschule für Bildende Künste, West Berlin (DE). State examination and teaching qualification
1969 – 1973	History of art studies, Freie Universität, West Berlin (DE)
1968 – 1973	Hochschule für Bildende Künste, West Berlin (DE), certificate as master student

Selected solo exhibitions

2011	Galerie Willi Christen, Zurich (CH)
2005	Schloss Greifensee (CH)
2004	Galerie Jochen Höltje, Tübingen (DE)
1998	Galerie Collis, Lausanne (CH)
1997	Kum Ho Museum of Art, Seoul (KR) Pyo Gallery, Seoul (KR)
1992	Kum Ho Gallery, Seoul (KR) Sam Art Gallery, Seoul (KR)
1991	Galerie Labyrinth, Basel (CH)
1989	Galerie Ursula Siegenthaler, Zurich (CH) Park Yue Sook Gallery, Seoul (KR)
1988	Goethe-Institute, Seoul (KR) Ga-Dun Gallery, Gwangju (KR)
1987	Staatliches Filmhaus, Nürnberg (DE)
1986	Park Yue Sook Gallery, Seoul (KR) Gong Kwan Gallery, Seoul (KR)
1985	Städtische Galerie Berne (CH) Kunstverein Uelzen (DE)
1983	Galerie Diebenturm, Sursee (CH) Galerie Schlossberg, Burgdorf (CH)
1977	Galerie Kunst und Handwerk, West Berlin (DE)
1975	Galerie Aue, West Berlin (DE)
1973	Galerie Sandy, West Berlin (DE)

Selected group exhibitions

2011	Riverside Gallery, Hackensack, New Jersey (USA)
2008	Galerie Jochen Höltje, Tübingen (DE) Art Karlsruhe (DE)
2005	Art Frankfurt (DE)
2001	Wooduk Gallery, Seoul (KR)
1999	Kunsthalle Berne (CH)
1995	Korean Women Artists Festival, Seoul Gallery of Art (KR)
1989	Inaugural exhibition, Museum Kum Ho, Seoul (KR)
1988	Fifth anniversary jubilee exhibition, Park Yue Sook Gallery, Seoul (KR)
1986	Asian International Art Exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, Fukuoka (JP) Inaugural exhibition, MIN Gallery, Seoul (KR) Korean Art Fair, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul (KR)
1984	Exhibition Stadttheater St. Gallen (CH)
1973	Ausstellung der Berliner Künstlerinnen (Gedock), West Berlin (DE)
1972	Galerie Das Bild, West Berlin (DE)

Grants, purchases and awards

2009	Purchase by Museum Face, Seoul (KR)
1995	Purchase by EMC Records, Munich (DE)
1992	Purchase by Kum Ho Museum of Art, Seoul (KR)
1989	1st prize for the catalogue of the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul (KR)
1988	Grant by Schweizer Kulturstiftung Pro Helvetia (CH) Grant by Goethe-Institute, Seoul (KR) Grant by Drama Center, Seoul (KR)
1986	Purchase by National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul (KR)
1985	Purchase by City of Berne (CH) Grant by municipal Arts Commission of the City and Canton of Berne (CH)

Selected works

1. Kwang-Ja Yang, *how far do you fly?*, 2011, ink on paper, 40 x 42 cm.
2. Kwang-Ja Yang, *Light Reflex*, 2011, ink, oils and egg tempera on Korean base paper, 94 x 78 cm.
3. Kwang-Ja Yang, *all keep to the right*, 2010, ink on paper, 34.5 x 45.5 cm.
4. Kwang-Ja Yang, *Lovely Shadows*, 2011–2012, ink, oils and egg tempera on Korean base paper, 97 x 78 cm.