

Jun Yang

The Artist, the Work and the Exhibition

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Kunsthhaus Graz, Universalmuseum Joanneum

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The solo exhibition by Jun Yang is dedicated to fundamental questions of artistic work: what significance do original works, unique pieces, series and reproductions have in art today? How is artistic practice defined when exchanged with others?

In cooperation with Art Sonje Center, Seoul, Neue Galerie Graz and Austrian Sculpture Park

Curated by Barbara Steiner and Jun Yang

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Who is Jun Yang?

Jun Yang was invited as an artist for this exhibition by Kunsthaus Graz. Together with Barbara Steiner, he also curated the exhibition for Graz.

Jun Yang was born in 1975 in mainland China and in 1979 moved to Vienna, where he grew up. He has Austrian citizenship. He lives in Vienna, where he and his brother jointly run a restaurant designed by him. He also lives with his family in Yokohama (Japan) and in Taipei (Taiwan). Jun Yang has already exhibited his work many times at various venues in Graz. This exhibition was previously shown in a different format last year at Art Sonje Center in Seoul in Korea.

Unique?

A theme explored in Jun Yang's art is that he is not the only person in the world called Jun Yang. In his 2015 project *Jun Yang meets Jun Yang*, he invited men and women with the same name to a meeting. Depending on the linguistic context his name is pronounced in many different ways, which is sometimes reflected in how it is spelled. Some letters seem to be addressed to a completely different person yet still get delivered to him.

Identity

When you see Jun Yang among his namesakes, the question arises—to what extent does a name constitute one's identity? What does the individuality of a person consist in? Is it disturbing to meet someone else with the same name? Jun Yang invited the artist Jun Yang from California to Graz to become part of his exhibition here. The two artists share the same name, but work in very different ways. The name alone does not constitute a brand.

Authorship

In art and in particular on the art market, the uniqueness of an artist is crucial to their success as a brand. Alongside the artistic quality of their work, their recognition factor and prominence become part of the economic value of their art. Jun Yang questions these mechanisms by not allowing himself to be tied to a visually recognisable signature style. And yet his art consistently raises similar questions about the art system. How important is the original here?

I?

Jun Yang asked the artists represented at his exhibition to provide a self-portrait. Erwin Bauer, sireneun young jung, Lee Kit, Oliver Klimpel, Michikazu Matsune, Paul McCarthy, Yuuki Nishimura, Yuki Okomura, Barbara Steiner, Koki Tanaka, Maja Vukoje, Jun Yang and Bruce Yonemoto have contributed very different depictions of themselves. What does 'ME' consist in? Can 'ME' mean a single selfie? How many roles do we play in real space and how many in virtual space? How many can we be, how many do we want to be? *The Monograph Project*, which Jun Yang has been working on with Oliver Klimpel and Barbara Steiner for over seven years now, demonstrates that a monograph can have not only several chapters or volumes but also follow different narratives in a multidimensional way, with different designs and approaches to a person. How do we describe ourselves, how are we described, and how do we want to be described?

Works

Some works appear repeatedly in the exhibition. Some of them are even on sale in the shop. What is the original? Is a reproduction worth less? Does restoring an original make it a unique piece? These questions all determine the value of art on the art market, which ultimately represents a key to the artist's success. The signature style and the actual signature of the artist make the work unique and rare, raising its status. In this admiration there lies a very special kind of power, a fascination and wonder. The brilliant appeal that the artwork has for us is known as aura. To what extent does this come from our own view?

China

When we think of China, we tend to make the following associations: Chinese food, rising economic power, the Year of the Pig, state surveillance, TCM, the destruction of cultural heritage, fortune cookies, the erasing of history, red lanterns, groups of tourists hurrying past, lucky dragons, and also the avid copying of successful products. This doesn't just apply to consumer goods: whole cities are copied, such as the clone of the Upper Austrian town of Hallstatt built in China, or the Vienna Secession building reproduced as the entrance hall for a skyscraper. Jun Yang had cityscapes of Graz copied from classic postcard motifs by a skilled ink painter in China. Do they seem Chinese as a result?

Wiener Schnitzel

Supposedly, everyone in Austria likes Wiener Schnitzel, especially as it is one of the country's most famous national dishes. This is probably as much a stereotype as Chinese people not being able to pronounce the letter 'R'. Often these and other clichés are the result of images. Jun takes the image of the perfect, golden schnitzel and turns it into a wallpaper pattern. The red lanterns in the Needle also come as no surprise to us, instead acting as confirmation that they are almost to be expected in a 'Chinese' exhibition. What role is played by symbols like these in the context of increasing global uniformity?

Exhibition

Visiting *Jun Yang. The Artist, the Work and the Exhibition*, we soon notice that it is not just a solo exhibition with one artist, but that it in fact also undermines this concept by involving other artists. Because Jun Yang has, for instance, participated here as a performer in others' works, he is present and yet has no claim to authorship. He shows his colleagues' works and appears in them in many different ways. He refuses ever to be confined to one role. So who is Jun Yang?

A comprehensive exhibition guide accompanies the exhibition. More information can also be found on our website

www.kunsthhausgraz.at