

CHEN JIANG-HONG: "I paint with my words and write with my paintings".

by Ma Padioleau, November 2023



French-Chinese artist Chen Jiang-Hong's large-format paintings in deep blacks and transparent greys, in the style of Chinese inks, caught the admiring eye of visitors to the Asia Now fair in Paris in October 2023. The artist is represented by Galerie Taménaga. Chen Jiang-Hong is also an illustrator. In May 2023 he was on show at the Théâtre du Rond-Point in Paris, with François Orsoni's production of his autobiographical album "Le Petit Garde rouge": a beautiful stage collaboration.

Chen Jiang-Hong, born in Tianjin in northern China in 1963, has lived and worked in France since 1987. When asked by Oriane Castel of Art Critique* about his choice to paint abstractions, Chen Jiang-Hong replied, "In fact, in China, where I come from, traditional painting is already very abstract. In Chinese calligraphy, strokes can refer to abstract art. Unlike Western painting, Chinese painting was very early on into forms of abstraction. Chen Jiang-Hong paints in oils but also in ink. And sometimes his oil paintings look like ink. Mixed with turpentine, the oil takes on the fluidity of ink. He chooses fairly dark colours, as in his works presented at Asia Now 2023, but from which emanate a great deal of light. "Without observing light, I can't paint, and without light you can't see my work. Light is essential and it is distinct from colours", he declared. The artist works on transparency. He adds many layers

that he applies one on top of the other "to try to create a veil that can be discovered". But Chen Jiang-Hong also uses magnificent colours. In his 2020 exhibition at the Taménaga gallery, deep blues rubbed shoulders with lagoon greens and ochres competed with flamboyant reds. Chen Jiang-Hong has developed his own aesthetic, fusing the traditions of Eastern and Western painting, deeply influenced by his own experience of living between two cultures.



The use of long wolf-hair brushes links Chen Jiang-Hong's art to the Chinese calligraphic tradition. They enable him to cover a vast surface in a single gesture, which is essential for the painter. "The artist lays the canvas flat on the floor of his studio, then applies the soaked brush to the blank surface and, with his whole body carried away by his impetus, performs an exalted choreography; the motif then appears on the canvas", explains the Taménaga gallery. His themes also take him back to his Asian roots, which revolve around nature, bamboo and lotus flowers.



Chen Jiang-Hong was a little "redguard" of the Chinese Communist Party, as he explains in his illustrated album "Mao and Me". He grew up in Mao's China, at the time of the Cultural Revolution. In "Mao and Me", he draws his daily life, the Maoist propaganda and also the death of his grandfather, which affected him greatly. Chen Jiang-Hong is an album illustrator, with drawings he paints in Indian ink. His stories blend Chinese legends, culture and history with feelings and questions that are universal to today's children. On stage at the Théâtre du Rond-Point in Paris in May-June 2023, accompanied by three performers and a noisemaker, he painted the characters and settings from his autobiography directly on stage. It was a second theatrical success for Chen Jiang-Hong with the complicity of his director François Orsoni, after the stage adaptation of Chinese Tales, presented at the MC93 in 2018.

*Art Critique, Series of interviews with Chen Jiang-Hong by Oriane Castel, August 2023

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