

Yang Jiechang
Making Beyond... Beyond Making... Be... Make... Maybe... Y...

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Flows and permanent creation

In *God we Trust* (2008) is the title of a work created by Yang Jiechang on the occasion of an artistic intervention at the Stanford University School of Medicine. Yang edited a video based on a series of fixed microscopic images showing the bacteria *E. Coli*, which is commonly found in the intestinal flora of mammals. For 58 seconds, the multimedia work rolls through a sequenced flow of a red, organic, liquid space. At the bottom of the screen, the following phrases appear intermittently: "Everything can happen"; "E. Coli is the actor"; "Regression – Evolution"; "Discrete Infinity". Projected on a flat screen, the video is linked up to a phrase in neon that repeats the title of the work: "In God we Trust". The soundtrack of the video, a combination of electronic music and electric guitar was composed by James Ferrell, dean of the Stanford University Chemical and Systems Biology Department. With *In God we Trust*, Yang Jiechang's art meets Western scientific culture, where observation and experimentation are fundamental phases, and where the margin of error is reduced to a minimum in order to abstract an element of life and transform it into a verifiable and incontestable concept. Yet here, Yang Jiechang proposes putting aside the clairvoyance of scientific truth in order to bring out a kind of sensitivity where flows, uncertainty, being, modulation, error and chaos prevail. The image of the bacteria is considered more a spreading expanse than an organized surface of the body that would be subject to the mastery of the eye and the mind. The person observing the work is invited to expand his vision of the inside of the body towards micro- or macroscopic infinity, giving free reign to associations as diverse as a torrent of lava, rays of light, a monochrome in perpetual

formation, fluids escaping from the body, organs turned inside out like a glove, the rich and infinite symbolism of the color red in all the cultures of the world, an incessant flow of ink, the image of the cosmos in permanent revolution...

Yang Jiechang also creates friction between two other visual and linguistic strata: the crimson flows share the space with the words in neon – *In God We Trust* – which give off light while affirming a spiritual belief. The crystallization in glass of the affirmative phrase contrasts with the fluid and incessant movement of the red-colored clusters. A relationship exists with the sporadic appearances of the poetic phrases in the video, for example, “Discrete Infinity” or “Everything can happen”. Therefore, there truly is a material, formal and semantic conflagration at work in *In God We Trust*, infiltrating certainty with doubt, truth and belief with surprise. Another artistic paradox resides in the very materiality of the work. *In God We Trust* is a powerful, performative statement, which is, however, only possible thanks to the circulation of neon gas, meaning an ensemble of molecules and atoms, that have neither form nor volume of their own unless contained in a solid object. In other words, the sentence *In God We Trust* is an attempt at divine representation, but we can only understand this representation through faith. The ceaseless circulation of gas in a glass tube that creates the diffusion of light, and thus, metaphorically speaking, creates the illusion of truth. Hence the God visualized by Yang Jiechang is never directly named or identified. He still needs to be constructed, with the same amount of searching, error, doubt and truth that we use to build our speech, our thoughts, our acts or, more simply, our relationship to daily life. This last stratum of perpetual flow within the work is itself covered or accompanied by a soundtrack. The essence of sound is manifest in its fundamental impermanence and its immaterial diffusion among all the strata of the living sphere and of memory.

In God We Trust is a productive work, because it builds unexpected connections with Yang Jiechang’s other works. It would be a mistake to make hasty distinctions between Yang’s videos

(or works in other contemporary media) and his ink paintings, which one could consider more conventional in technique. We would actually fall into the trap that the artist himself tried to avoid: the reification of the status of the image in extremely coded classifications and practices. On the contrary, Yang Jiechang's goal resides in the ceaseless exploration of the potential for the permanent transformation of the image.

Yang Jiechang was born in Foshan, an old Buddhist, Taoist and Confucianist city in southern China, where he lived until 1978. The Cultural Revolution proclaimed in 1966 by Mao Zedong made a profound impression on him, and in 1970 he joined the Red Guards, a mass movement mainly made up of high school and university students. Yang Jiechang distanced himself from the exactions carried out by the Red Guards and instead studied traditional Chinese calligraphy from 1974 to 1978 at the Foshan Folk Art Institute. In 1978, at the end of the Cultural Revolution, he continued his artistic education at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts. After his graduation he spent a few months in Beijing, and returned to Guangzhou to teach from 1982 to 1988. His great mastery of calligraphy and ink painting could have confirmed his inclination towards these artistic genres. But this was not the case, as Yang Jiechang quickly realized the limits of academic stylistic conventions, which were confined between the already obsolete socialist realism and the reified formalism of traditional Chinese painting. He nourished his art by opening it up to different conceptual, critical and esthetic contents. In 1984, Yang Jiechang met the priest Huangtao, who initiated him into Taoism, a decisive teaching that would plunge him into a "world of grey and black"¹ where "it was once said: true appearance is without form"². During this same period, Yang Jiechang participated in debates about concepts and critical positions within the post-revolutionary 1980's context. He published studies such as "The end of idols: there is no art at art school" or "How to accept 'copying' as a teaching method for painting in China". His close childhood friendship with the art critic Hou Hanru was unending, and Hou Hanru continuously

¹ Yang Jiechang in catalogue Yang Jiechang, Paris: galerie Jeanne-Bucher, 1991, no page numbers.

² Yang Jiechang in catalogue Yang Jiechang, Paris: galerie Jeanne-Bucher, 1991, no page numbers.

defended Yang's work by introducing him to Jean-Hubert Martin for the exhibition *Les Magiciens de la Terre*, held in the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 1989, and even pushed his work to Europe. In late 1988, Yang Jiechang moved to Paris. After having a premonition of the events of Tiananmen, he wanted to escape the repressive context in China. But he also left in order to live with Martina Köppel-Yang, an art historian specialized in contemporary Chinese art. Martina Köppel-Yang carried out important research on the conditions of the emergence of the Chinese artistic avant-garde from 1979 to 1989. In her book, *Semiotic Warfare: The Chinese Avant-Garde*³, she examines the signs inherent in discourse, institutions and artistic practices in the 1980's that led to the constructive controversies of the Chinese avant-garde. The press, art schools and artists groups questioned the notions of realism, formalism, self expression and modern consciousness with regard to the heaviness of socialist realism, the recent opening up to Western art and culture, and the appearance of new contemporary practices initiated by the artists Cheng Conglin, Huang Yong Ping, Luo Zhongli, Wang Guangyi, Wu Shanzhuan, the Xiamen Dada collective, etc.

Since 1989, Yang Jiechang has been working in France, Germany and China, creating works that switch unabashedly from drawing to ink painting, video, action, sculpture or installation. The range of his creation is considerably vast, deliberately widened, but always precise, drawing on a vigorous tradition and critical contemporary positions. His works escape any kind of categorical self-sufficiency. As Hou Hanru rightly put it, "Yang Jiechang's commitment to "tradition" actually provokes the necessity of everyone living in the contemporary world to embrace and merge with the other, with everyone and everything from different cultures, with any "traditional form" of expression can be an effective medium to express the state of the world today... Yang Jiechang's art is somehow idealistic and even utopian. It rejects dominant and standardized

³ Martina Köppel-Yang, *Semiotic Warfare : The Chinese Avant-Garde, 1979-1989, A Semiotic Analysis*, Hong-Kong : Timezone 8, 2003.

rules. But it is by no means nihilistic. On the contrary, it's always rooted in the ground in order to constantly revitalize the road of life itself. Taking real life as is and absorbing it as a natural part of his work, it's a cocktail of idealism and realism, a pragmatic utopia..."⁴

In-forming the Figure

In 1988, Yang Jiechang started working on his *Hundred Layers of Ink*, a series that has been in continual development to this day. Applying successive layers of black ink on Xuan paper, the works obtain the material quality of dense, stratified monochromes with subtle variations in light according to the absorption and reverberation qualities of the paper and the densities of the superimposed layers of ink. This kind of work is the polar opposite of the calligraphic gesture, which is based on the trace of the brush, forming the letter/figure as the major formal element. Repetition, superposition and saturation are pictorial acts that he pushes to the extreme to demystify Chinese painting. But when exhibiting several *Hundred Layers of Ink* in the same space, it is not so much the conceptual deconstruction of painting dogmas that is most important, but rather the sensitive creation of infinite variations and differences generated through the repetitive act. In addition, the formats of the *Hundred Layers of Ink* are often large – the four works exhibited in 1989 at the Centre Pompidou each measured 420 x 280 cm – which orients the autonomy of the paper towards a field of ink open to the inevitable relationships that are part of the changing surrounding space, as well as a strong physical and spiritual apprehension of the work through the spectator. Yang Jiechang therefore bends the rules of Chinese art, but this does not divert him from the deep, ancestral philosophy of Taoism, which nourishes his work with substance. The path of Taoism refuses sectarian, social and ideological constraints and embraces a primordial availability, serene but intense, with multiple, paradoxical sudden

⁴ Hou Hanru, « Towards a World of Poets – Yang Jiechang's work », in catalogue *Yang Jie Chang : No-Shadow Kick*, Shanghai / Duolun Museum of Modern Art – Tang Contemporary Art, 2008, p.2.

appearances, abundant with life. This “laissez-faire” characteristic of Taoism is anything but senseless. It is a completely autonomous creative act for anyone who desires to explore it in all its dimensions, and Yang Jiechang’s black inks display that kind of quest with sensitivity. Yang Jiechang declared in 1991:

“I hope that my daily life will become more and more of a meditation. Here’s why: when I paint, I don’t paint. My paintings are not paintings. My ideal would be to eliminate every trace of painting.”⁵

In front of the *Hundred Layers of Ink*, the Western eye could very well be frustrated if it limited itself to an obstinate view of the history of abstraction in the West – Malevitch, Pollock, Reinhardt, Soulages, etc. – because Yang Jiechang bases his monochromes on multiple issues. Besides widening the possibilities for using ink and paper in art, in the *Hundred Layers of Ink*, Yang Jiechang began a complex exploration of the significance of the figure that he would continue to develop in his later paintings on silk and in his sculptures, videos and actions. And so, around the mid-1990’s, Yang Jiechang’s *Hundred Layers of Ink* generated arbitrary folds in the material, accentuating the shiny effect of the black ink in certain spots, suggesting bodily or organic references, sensitizing a material in perpetual metamorphosis, suggesting new topographies. Some works in the series have telling titles, such as *Voyage en Mexique – Wings* (1990), *Cut the Fingernails from my Body* (1994), or *Guillotine* (1992-1996). These studies on the figure using the modulation-transformation of the black ink resonate strongly with the red-colored flows in the video *In God We Trust*, where permanent mutation is at the heart of the work. It is also interesting to note that after the exhibition of his works at Stanford University in 2008, Yang Jiechang came back to one of his *Hundred Layers of Ink* from the 1990’s and entitled it *E. Coli* in reference to the representations of the bacteria.

We point out the fundamental links between the work of Yang Jiechang and Taoism, but it would not be incongruous to accept other translations of the work in the context of Western culture.

⁵ Id., *ibid.*

Whether in the *Hundred Layers of Ink* or in the installation *In God We Trust* video, we can't help referring to Spinoza who advanced the possibility of thinking the body differently, other than from the purely empirical approach or from the position of reason's control over the body. For Spinoza, "However, no one has hitherto laid down the limits to the capabilities of the body, that is, no one has as yet been taught by experience what the body can accomplish solely by the laws of nature, insofar as she is regarded as extension. (...) Again, I think everyone's experience will confirm the statement, that the mind is not at all times equally fit for thinking on a given subject, but according as the body is more or less fitted for being stimulated by the image of this or that object, so also is the mind more or less fitted for contemplating the said object. (...) Experience abundantly shows that men can govern anything more easily than their tongues, and restrain anything more easily than their appetites (...)"⁶

One contemporary translation of the philosophy of Spinoza has been proposed by Gilles Deleuze, particularly his famous concept of the "Body without organs" on the basis of which he tries to surpass the limits of the body to consider it as a potential expansion of the overthrowing of hierarchy. But Gilles Deleuze also introduced the notion of "figural" when he studied the work of the painter Francis Bacon: the figural does not proceed by abstraction or by illusionist or narrative figuration. The figural consists of building the Figure as a full and complete sensation, as well as reflecting the changes in sensation that occur by extension, modulation, reversal, transformation: "The form related to the sensation (Figure) is the opposite of the form related to an object that it is supposed to represent (figuration)... Sensation is what happens from one "order" to another, from one "level" to another, from one "area" to another."⁷

We are at the heart of Yang Jiechang's creative process based on his Chinese and Cantonese culture, based on Taoist thought.

⁶ Spinoza, *The Ethics, Part III, Proposition II*, as translated by R.H.M. Elwes (1883).

⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation*, as translated by Daniel W. Smith (2003).

Other works by Yang Jiechang portray the body with radically few means in order to maximize the creation of a “figure in action”. *Testament* (1991) is an extremely effective work in this sense: A Japanese pottery jar is set at the bottom of a wall with the following inscription: “One day I die an unnatural death. Then one should feed me to a tiger and keep its excrements.”

The decoding of the words in itself is powerful, and the relationship between the text and the ceramic is a source of sharp visual ambiguity among the object, the words and the absent figure of the body. The figure of the body is present in the space of the work, yet it is entirely dissolved on a formal level, as well as in the content of the phrase. *Testament* interconnects voluntarily heterogeneous realities, such as the human body, words, ceramic, the animal body and excrement. The reduction of the body to fecal matter is brutal but essential and precious, because it brings the significance of the living and the spiritual to a climax. Instead of morbid antinomies, *Testament* proposes fusions and beneficial transitions to rich hybridity and free regeneration.

As for the figure of death, in 1982 Yang Jiechang produced his graduation work entitled *Massacre*, an ink painting that was refused by the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts. It showed a chaotic pile of heads between deformity, screaming and cremation. The work shows the horror of humanity occupied with carrying out acts of untold violence on individuals reduced to a mass, then to a mass grave... Later in his career, Yang Jiechang continued painting different works, mostly ink on paper, showing scattered fragments of skulls, ribs and other body parts. The titles of these works stir up trouble and create semantic voids regarding the figures: *Album of Secret Merit* (1999), *Allah's, Jesus' and Buddha's Bones* (2003) and *Ya Rabbi* (2006). In 2004, the images of bone fragments were spread as a mural around the upper perimeter of an exhibition room (*What screams to scream, to which demon shall I commit myself?*) and embroidered in gold thread on 5 silk scrolls (*Scroll of Secret Merit*) and then accompanied by traditional Cantonese music. Between 2004 and 2009, Yang Jiechang worked on *Underground Flowers*, an ensemble of blue and white porcelain sculptures of bone fragments with floral motifs typical of

traditional Chinese, Dutch or Portuguese porcelain. The bone fragments then were delicately placed on squares of painted silk and inserted in wooden frames.

All of these representations, oscillating between traumatic blackness and ornamental preciousness, speak of the attempts made to put back together or spread out oppressed bodies and concealed stories. The abjection of totalitarianism, the annihilation of cultural differences, the massification of singularities, the surveillance of bodies, the agglomeration of bodies in suburbs or megalopolises, their gathering or their pulverization are just some of the acts that haunt these bone fragment figures and bring us back to the ideas of Jean-Luc Nancy: “Here is the world of global departure: the spacing of *partes extra partes*, without anything to protect or support it, without the Subject of its destiny, only being like a prodigious throng of bodies (...) Spreading and tearing seem to be the recognizable shapes, combined from the rest, a kind of general human arrangement... These shapes hedge and cross the dense world of bodies. In a way, it belongs to them. But they can never own it, and it will remain out of reach, out of sight, out of torture.”⁸

Self-portraits and ascensions

Yang Jiechang creates surprising self-portraits where the figure is continually stretched in its infinite; the artist makes fascinating turns back and forth between images that express on one hand the raw, erotic or carnal power of the body, and on the other, the poetic and spiritual dimension of the space. Yang Jiechang’s self-portraits can, for example, take a joyful form through the astonishing use of Chinese calligraphy: in *Self-Portrait at Forty* (1996), the ink painting diverts the perfection of the line into coarse and trembling outlines – slightly highlighted by acrylics – tracing the naked figure of a male body, head truncated, arms spread out and penis

⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, Paris: Métailié, 1992, pp. 37, 38.

erect... But beyond the representation of the body, it is clearly the power of creation that catches the figure knowingly between irony and a sincere act of fertile energy.

Formally very different, *Deep Liquid – Self-portrait* (2007) is a large painting done in ink and mineral colors on nine silk panels measuring a total of 288 x 1170 cm. Yang Jiechang is not concerned with the depiction of the face in this self-portrait, as he chose to represent the body from behind, and he has also considerably reduced this bodily form towards the top of the third panel to better immerse the spectator in an immense aquatic environment that spreads throughout the rest of the polyptych. The spectator's eye is not so much asked to look over the details of the individual's identity, as to be literally and metaphorically plunged into this blue and grey expanse. The figure in *Deep Liquid* is therefore not only the image of a body but the sensation and very act of coming to the surface. "To come to the surface" is an expression related to the experience of drowning – something Yang Jiechang experienced in childhood. It is also the perfect metaphor for pictorial acts: *Deep Liquid* is an ink painting that restores flesh and depth to the surface of the painting. *Deep Liquid* has nothing to do with the Western Euclidian perspective, and nothing to do with its opposite, the flatness of the canvas that is said to affirm the modernist autonomy of the work. *Deep Liquid* shows depth by working at the surface with the help of two contradictory forces: on one hand, the dizzying vertical aspect of the panels creates a dive-like motion, descending towards the abyss, except for the fact that the deepest point is occupied by the eye of the spectator; on the other hand, the alignment of the nine panels creates a horizontal aspect that is just as radical and gives powerful density to the expanse of blue ink. The blue concocted by Yang Jiechang is like a second skin on which folds, bubbles, mini-waves and coagulations unfurl.

In 2006, a year before *Deep Liquid*, Yang Jiechang created a self-portrait entitled *Artists continue to try hard – Self-portrait*, another painting on silk using ink and mineral colors. But here, the vertical elevation of a single silk panel (220 x 142 cm) is given priority, as well as the

visualization of the figure in the air, clouds and sky. The body of the artist faces the spectator, at the center of the painting, but he already seems to be detached from the earthly world, gazing far off, his body floating in the indefinite space of the sky. A vertical line of text appears in black ink at the bottom-right of the work declaring: "Everything is ok". In this self-portrait, the vertical elevation has nothing to do with blessed evanescence. Instead, there is friction with the powerful pictorial materiality of the clouds conferring a special density to the space of the painting. An enigmatic fluttering is enacted between the bodily figure and the shapeless masses of the clouds. It is evident that this pictorial representation is also a "trace" of thoughts, drawn on the heavy social, political and institutional context that the artist is trying to surmount in his own way. For Yang Jiechang, the arrangement of the figure in indefinite, interstitial, floating topographies, open to sky, earth and water, is a constructive attitude and part of the practice of liberty and creation.

For his exhibition at the galerie Jaeger Bucher in February 2009, Yang Jiechang shows a series of ink paintings on silk created in 2008:

On Ascension - Self-Portrait
On Ascension - Ex Orbit
On Ascension – Maria
On Ascension - $e=mc^2$ au-dessus de Nagasaki
On Ascension - Flying Shoes
On Ascension – Burning

When reading the title *Ascension*, it certainly seems easier for an artist with a trans-historical and intercultural background like Yang Jiechang to confront the notion of elevation, which for a Western mind from a Judaeo-Christian culture would be too connotative with the religious theme of transcendence. Yang Jiechang has distanced himself sufficiently from histories, contexts and other narratives, allowing him to create works of unexpected daring. However, Yang Jiechang's art is never naive: *On Ascension* is less a lyrical abstraction than a notion-action derived directly from religion (*Maria*) as he focuses on a common, everyday object (*Flying Shoes*) or refers to painful political events such as the atomic bomb ($e = mc^2$ *au-dessus de Nagasaki*) or setting a

fire (*Burning*). The *On Ascension* series is composed of a maelstrom of signs that extend and blur the paths of transcendence: after the sensation of elevation comes that of the fall or of suspension, airy lightness mixes with the solid thickness of the clouds, the clouds in the sky can be confused with the mushroom cloud or with smoke, the sacred icon of the Virgin is juxtaposed with a pair of flying shoes. Yang Jiechang is not trying to deconstruct or destroy at all costs, but rather to find what Michel Foucault called these “other spaces”, open to paradoxical aggregation, moving compositions, in short, these spaces, between the sky and the earth, that authorize creation. It is also important to remember that in Chinese popular culture, the cloud is a fundamental element linking the celestial and the terrestrial, hence its indefinite materiality between fluidity and solidity.

If we bring up the religious and divine aspects, we should note that *On Ascension – Maria* goes against the accepted version of the Ascension in Christian imagery: the Marian icon appears in a horizontal format (140 x 230 cm) and seems to be flattened and slanted, as if to slide and rise up more easily into a sky cluttered with compact masses. This contradictory horizontal positioning is in no way cynical for Yang Jiechang. It is true that he disinhibits our relation to the religious canon but he also retranslates, in his way, the point of view of the simple spectator looking up at the church vaults where the scenes of the Ascension are represented.

With these enlarged religious limitations, it is interesting to associate *On Ascension – Maria* to another self-portrait of the artist done in 2006 entitled *Self-Portrait at Fifty*. In this portrait, we see Yang Jiechang as a Lama in a posture of meditation on an azure background. Above his body – instead of clouds – float three writings from three different languages – Tibetan, Chinese and Italian. The writings declare the same thing: “Venice Biennial / Tibetan Pavilion”. The work is simple but explicit and lapidary, without concessions, but generous and welcoming to critical and crossover looks. In other words, Yang Jiechang’s works elude conservative reifications from the

past while short-circuiting the contemporary ersatz of our day that could catch us up in the trap of opportunistic seduction.

Topographies of the displaced being

Yang Jiechang's works not only brilliantly cross over identities, nations and territories to detect hidden strata of memory and to point out the aberrations of dogmas and systems, but they also detect similarities and junctions between individuals, between energies and possibilities to extend art. It is not surprising that in the world history of art, strong and indelible works come from exile, from what the artist Jonas Mekas magnificently calls "the displaced being"⁹. Artists like Felix Gonzales-Torres, Adel Abdessemed or Yang Jiechang sow the seeds of displacement, passage, crossover, thus covering the unexpected gaps of creativity where works of art have an intransigent liberty that cannot be contained within borders, within partitions and totalitarianisms. Yang Jiechang has created several works that trace back and reconfigure contemporary geopolitics in multiple directions. He especially uses flags and banners as a media to visualize these other spaces. It is important to note, however, that his ink paintings like *One Hundred Layers of Ink*, are already un-manageable immensities that "prefigure" the works related to pavilions. Moreover, some flags are the direct result of his ink paintings.

Yang Jiechang uses various visual and allegorical strategies to bring together signs that cause us to question discourses of truth or hidden cultural and historical contexts. This is what happens with *We Are Good at Everything Except for Speaking Mandarin. PRD* (2005), a performance/installation consisting of a large blue and white banner – the colors of an imaginary Cantonese flag – unfolding from the wall horizontally down to the floor – and neon words

⁹ Jonas Mekas, *I had Nowhere To Go, Diary of a Displaced Person, (1944-1954)*, New York : Black Thistle Press, 1991.

arranged on the wall like a flag, declaring: "We are good at everything except for speaking Mandarin. PRD.", a reference to Hong-Kong and the region of Canton's resistance to the supremacy of Mandarin as the single language of China. Amidst wooden palettes, a video broadcasts a rock group performing in-situ, playing what could very well be a hymn. Between global and local, Yang Jiechang's work plays on monolithic identities to better deconstruct and reveal their contradictions.

In other installations, Yang Jiechang spurs on the confrontation and embracing of foreign cultures, the foreigner always being a welcome figure in his works. He also presents an inversed imitation of the history of the British colonization of Hong-Kong by showing the colonization of the city of Liverpool by the Cantonese in *Give me empty areas of Liverpool for 33 years that I can fill* (2006). The work combines a painting of the map of the city of Liverpool, and the flag of the city of Liverpool with one end tied to Yang's imaginary flag of Canton. Spots of blue paint are splashed on the wall.

For his exhibition at the galerie Jaeger Bucher, Yang Jiechang prepared a radical and sensitive work, in which the banner is reduced to its simplest expression: a white 330 x 150 cm canvas with a small bit of burned canvas in the middle. Entitled *On Ascension* (2009), this work is magnificent and powerful in its ability to sweep away the occupation of territories and borders, as it simultaneously shatters a profound effort at remembering our collective histories, our religious wars and our ideologies fed by the obsession of possessing territories. The work can also be simply considered a raw canvas, whose materiality creates semantic radicalism as effective as Jasper Johns' *Flag* or Felix Gonzalez-Torres' *Untitled (Passport)* made up of photos of the sky. Yang Jiechang's work is on an avid quest for a permanent openness allowing zones of contact, friction or ideological debate, but never nihilism, destruction or oppression. His work is never a synonym for levelling or globalizing pluralism, but rather constructive energies based on the sublimation of thought through the image. Presenting Yang Jiechang's work simply requires

recognizing how much his art focuses on a radical availability and permanent openness to the unexpected and the accidental through the the living. The permanent creation observed in daily life moves him to see art in all its possibilities for extension, but also to perceive the power struggles within the venture of the creative process and the practice of liberty. Yang Jiechang's oeuvre is by no means a naïve contemplation of outward signs of life, because he never hesitates to look for a material and formal friction with political signs, taboos of the body, eroticism or death. Free from any didactic, militant or voyeuristic desires, Yang Jiechang's works point to the aberrations as well as the creative potential of our collective systems of life in the East or in the West.

Ascension.