



*I'm Not Happy Now!* / Bronze / 48×20×32cm / 2005

## Look at those dogs! On Poren Huang's Spiritual Metonymy

Written by | Wu, Shuann    Photos by | Powen Gallery

Ever since the completion of his first work "*I'm Not Happy Now!*" from *The Dog's Notes* series in 2005, to the birth of the new series *i Dog*, over 10 years of time has past. Even though the mood and the situation are different from what they were at the time, Poren Huang still continue to use all kinds of "dogs" as his primary creative topic. This way, the artist not only establishes his own personal style vocabulary, but it also is a testament to his own dedication and focus to the same topic. Due to the intimate experiences of close interactions with the dogs from a very young age, from delivery, safeguarding, nurturing, to when the dog finally becomes a beautiful adult dog, to its passing; Poren Huang had once raised over ten dogs at the same time, spending his day and night with the dogs. This not only enabled Poren Huang to have a deep understanding of the dogs' anatomy, such as their bones, muscles, and arteries, but also a very deep and detailed grasp of the dogs' emotions, habits, and even the more subtle emotional expressions. A mixture of his personal emotions and

*Kiddo / Bronze, Baking Paint / 50x45x66cm / 2015*



keen observations, Poren Huang's understanding and feelings for the dogs run very deep, so deep that he can create a whole series of sculptures based on dogs that lasts 10 years. At the same time, he combines the fable that comes with each artwork to become a series overview that is closely connected to the atmosphere in our era and society.

### **Preface: Starting with the Form**

Even after being handled by the artist's skillful hands, most dogs still have to go through the retouching of cartoon aesthetics, and the individual details of the

dog, such as the mane, the eyes, the claws, and the tail are abandoned. The smooth block surface treatment pulls our line of sight away from the existing reality, and we enter into a direct exchange with the artist, the work, and the audience. At the same time, its lovely charm beckons us to keep moving towards it. Therefore, in addition to visual form, there is the touching (of course, one must be careful and wear gloves) and feeling of the coldness of the metal, the surface texture, and the shape that is full of flesh. As such, the artwork is not only the most heartwarming and real understanding of the moment, but also the best way to go through Poren Huang's creative process and the various details. The artwork is not only a symbol of expensive decorative taste for the home, but also a sacred domain for the soul.

Such cultivating style is not only cute and lovable on the one hand, but also it accurately reflects the truth and reality of the dogs. Whether it's actual or virtual, much like the interaction between people, there exists the intimacy, the appeal, the understanding and a variety of social reactions, which are even more pure, generous and straightforward than people today. Among them, the unique characteristics of the Taiwan dog of being alert, sensitive, loyal, honest, and determined have made artist to be repeatedly fascinated by the basic shape of the Taiwan dog. Even if the story that each artwork is trying to narrate is different, Poren Huang continues to use the shape of the Taiwan dog as his primary characterization subject. Regardless of the dog's personality and habits, they all have very precise and delicate qualities, like the finishing touches that bring out the particularity of each piece. While the artwork has already been stripped of its many details through the cartoon aesthetics process, by relying solely on the careful observation of the dogs and their performances, the artwork is able to play out the axiomatic emotions and renders power. Furthermore, when we openly observe Poren Huang's artwork, what we feel is not just any one

particular dog, but a group of artworks that have been neutralized, which gone through the back and forth pondering and production by the artist, and were produced under a complicated process. Even though it has the outward appearance of the dog, in reality it often is hidden with the artist's own sense of sentiment, humor, frankness, and naughtiness, as well as his deep experiences for art, life, society and humanity. Perhaps it is because of this, an aesthetics dimension about dogs is quietly spreading, making the artwork stands out from the others, becoming the object of beauty for people.



*Waiting / Bronze / 38×25×17cm / 2005*

### **From Caninity to Humanity**

Truthfully speaking, for Poren Huang, creation has never been just about artwork production, but rather the narration of a story or context that are closely related to his own thinking and doing. Born from a family of woodcarvers, he was highly interested in art from a young age; but Poren Huang's family objected to his decision to become an artist. It wasn't through his relentless determination and his hard work, that we are able to see the series of artwork today. Each of the artworks reflects the mood and societal observation of the artist; regardless if the audience shares the same feelings as the artist. Isn't the fact that each person can produce his or her own opinion the most fascinating part about art?

As mentioned previously, within Poren Huang's creation series, the various postures of the dogs are not only simple modeling changes of the dogs, but they also reflect the artist's spiritual experience and his precise observation of the current society,



*Snobbery / Bronze / 17×23×40cm / 2005*

and thereby offering his own opinions and knowledge. Such as *"I'm Not Happy Now!"* seems to not care at all about what others think; in *"Waiting"*, the dog is lying on the floor waiting for the owner to come home, where anticipation and loneliness are the most obvious moods; or *"Contentment"* reflects the lack of sleep that people today are constantly struggling with, therefore, the artist used the golden saliva to represent the deep sleep that is so hard to come by. However, Poren Huang is not just a favored son who is positive. In addition to the joy that

the positive attitude in his work brings to the audience, it is also a reminder for himself, to have hope and to not stop moving forward. It is also because of this, that the depth of Poren Huang's work can be released from the simple shapes, becoming the aesthetic target for the audience, while at the same time, sharing the artist's positive force.

### **Artwork as Spiritual Fable**

Whether it's the various art theories or history of the East or West, the artwork has also been viewed as the artist's earth-shattering creation and spiritual representation, and thereby has allowed it to be liberated from the public, making it a personal unique signature and marking – becoming the artist's personal creation – that there is none other than this one. Again, as previously mentioned, Poren Huang's creation is not only part of society, but also it is highly personal; in other words, it is a concept of sharing. Poren Huang's family was not supportive of his dream of being an artist; it wasn't until the artist spent many years working and studying on his own and after he created his personal vocabulary, that his creation officially started. His family's obstruction, and the uneasiness with his creations and life, even the negative energy towards societal development and human interaction, continued to surround him, making his burden continue to accumulate; by contrast, the various characteristics of the dogs seemed even more important and appropriate. To this, the artist pointed out that the primary objective of his creations is to make the audience feel the positive force and agitation, even if his current life is often not going well, but don't aesthetic experience of the art and the artist's creative expressions provide the perfect opportunity and channel for release?

Poren Huang's creations are both simple yet complicated; simple in terms of the imagery of his work, and complicated in terms of the thousands of words the artist has put into his work. Just like the many masters in the history of art, people often want to extrapolate the creative content from the artist's work. However, Poren Huang's artwork are extremely complicated, who can possibly understand what the artist is really thinking from his artwork? In other words, maybe these artworks never had just one simple meaning; the attempt to explore the essence of the artwork has always ended in someone being unsatisfied. Poren Huang's creations have always left us with a very large space for interpretation, and they convey meanings from many aspects. Whenever someone brings about a new opinion, the artist would feel overjoyed; after all, not only did he receive a new idea about his own creation, but also he now has a new realization that he can use in his next creation.

## **Human and Dog Becoming Each Other**

Here, what's important may not be how appropriate using the dog is as a way to express feelings, nor is it the giving of cuteness and positive emotions, but rather it is a kind of interchangeability of humans becoming dogs, and dogs becoming humans -- much like a changing werewolf. However, "becoming" is not the same as "transforming"; a human is not really going to turn into a dog, and vice versa. Rather, it is the similarity in the affects, becoming a "yes and no" paradoxical state. Here, the dogs made by Poren Huang are not simply just "shaped like a dog", but even the affects inside are also like dogs. It is also because of this, that Poren Huang not only sets up statues for the dogs' models, but rather he is also immersed in a slow moving and meticulous process. In regard to this, we see in Poren Huang's work that the dogs often appear with human-like postures. At the same time, when we are completely immersed into the work, the dog's momentum also often unconsciously shows a state of mind that is similar to that of a dog's. The paradoxical state of being like a human and also like a dog is spread wide open in front of us; in addition to opening an even broader aesthetic world, it also allows the appeal of the work and the artist to be even more full of abundance.

This becoming is always moving forward continuously, and it is intimately connected to us, to the artist, and even to the art itself. This becoming has no end; no matter how insistent it is, subtle differences continue to occur, and this has an effect on all of the related people, matters and things. Perhaps we should be happy about this participation; after all, it signifies that we are like the artist who is always encountering new things, and we exist in the same world.

### **A Kind of Dog Aesthetic!?**

Aesthetic means "perception" in Greek. However, with the rise of nation-states in Europe, this word has a different meaning depending on the different cultural contexts, such as discussing the subject of art, the discourse of what is aesthetics, and debates about beauty. Here, the author wants to use the ambiguity of this word to further discuss Poren Huang's series creation – the aesthetic perspective of dogs. Dog aesthetics does not mean the dog's aesthetic experience, and it's not about the discussion on whether or not the dog's style is pretty or ugly; but rather it's about the inspiring force one feels about the other through one's inner soul, even if the object is a piece of lifeless artwork.

Perhaps it is because of this, Poren Huang's creations opened a window, allowing our aesthetic experience to expand substantially and be more free, in order to feel the

world and life itself. The artist created a world that is led by dogs, and used this to provide us another societal fable, or our own spiritual outlet. No matter what, the aesthetic experience is always expanding and being discovered, just like the artist's creative process. Here, we conduct a dialogue through artwork, whether it falls on deaf ears or if it's just an immersed self-projection, it does not change our experience and thinking itself. In regards to this, perhaps Poren Huang is the best example, allowing us to rethink the value and meaning of art, and not just stay within the imagery and price, but rather to try and find an aesthetic route that belongs to us. At the same time, maintain the possibility for openness and change, to further experience the aesthetic experience of the world and the value of the artwork.

### **Summary: Worth the Wait**

Upon calculation, Poren Huang's *The Dog's Notes* has been going on for over 10 years, and the new *i Dog* is still under development. Even though the new series currently only has two pieces of artwork, we can already feel the transformation in the artist and the next series taking root. Creation always takes time, in order to allow the artist to have adequate thought and preparation. Therefore, right now we can only imagine a future that has yet to happen, but believe that it has its value.



*Contentment / Bronze / 43×36×23cm / 2011*