

Return to Innocence- Poren Huang's "The Dog's Notes" by Max Chaplin

"Good art offers endless discussion possibilities, and its existence has eternal value."

Looking at Poren Huang's sculptures elicits boundless images. In *"Friends"*, each individual in the global village must maintain a macro-perspective instead of limiting oneself, and must open one's heart to challenge and explore the wide world with confidence and courage (As demonstrated by the upright, tip-toe posture of the puppy). The interaction between the dog and the panda is intriguing, where behind the mutual civility seems many hidden tricks. One of the panda's hands is holding a pair of scissors, while the dog has its hand fisted behind its back. Are the two playing a game of Rock-paper-scissors? Or is the panda simply happily making the victory sign? Some interpret the panda as a metaphor for China, and whether in Hong Kong or Europe, the room for different interpretation is vast.

In 2005, Poren Huang launched *"The Dog's Notes"* sculpture series. Focusing on quality rather than quantity, the series comprises a total of 40 works to date, averaging 4 creations a year. Poren Huang has raised a record of more than 20 dogs at the same time, and is especially fond of the many superior qualities of the black Formosan Dog. Based on the Formosan Dog, his series of bronze and stainless steel sculptures are diversified and distinctive in personality and imagination, yet strongly consistent.



Poren Huang *Home* 40×15×22cm Bronze 2005



Poren Huang *Friends* 124×84×145cm Bronze Baking Paint 2008

Precursor to *"The Dog's Notes"*, the *"Iron Wood Forest"* metal creations are incorporated into Taiwan's art textbooks. The aboriginal protagonist in the creation demonstrates the dauntless vitality and fearless spirit of aborigines, and their adaptability to sea, plain or mountain environment. While the

works strongly manifest the positive qualities of aboriginals, the Formosan Dog is their companion. In Poren Huang's *"Iron Wood Forest"*, a dog is often present like a shadow helping the human character. Hence in 2005, the dog became center stage when Poren Huang began his *"The Dog's Notes"* series. In addition to the preserving the positive qualities of the creation, the series also delivers humor.

Dogs play the role dictated by humans.

Heaven has bestowed dogs as a human best friend! In ancient or primitive environment, humans coexisted with wild beasts, and dogs played the role of bugle sounding sentries who maintain alertness 24 hours a day to guard their homes and protect their masters till the end of their short lives. In addition to defending their territories, they were also excellent helpers who help their masters hunt or herd sheep. Moreover, dogs heal the human heart, giving their masters the warmest of care. Upon weaning and becoming independent creatures, dogs begin their lifetime of loyal and selfless dedication to their masters. Regardless of their masters' anger, sadness or lack of food, dogs never leave their masters but remain steadfast toward their masters. Today's dogs no longer play the sentry or hunting role, but have become pets, and if abandoned by their masters, become strays. With the development of human history, dogs have fully demonstrated that their loyalty, enthusiasm and pure attributes have remained constant, and contemporary humans should emulate such positive qualities. Poren Huang uses dogs to personify humans, and dog-like sculptures are in fact portrayal of humans.

Poren Huang believes that the 21st century human fails to measure up to dogs, not for the want of a good life, but for the lack of Confucian piety and resilience to stress. Dogs dedicate their lives to humans, following them uncomplainingly even in deprivation. In contrast, humans will rip apart kinship over money. Today's material economy is improving, yet the morality of humanity is deteriorating. In addition, a weakened mind, or the so-called civilized mental illness, has become the norm in today's society. Unlike agricultural or primitive African societies where people are content, people today lack resilience toward stress, resulting in manic-depressive mood swings or emotional instability. Nevertheless, humans can emulate the dogs at their side, and learn from their innocence and optimism so that simple pleasures or positive actions can bring about joy and serenity. Like dogs where a mere simple hug and warm interaction can induce them to burst with happiness, isn't simple bliss not within reach?

Born of woodcarving family

At one time, Poren Huang kept 20 dogs with him at the same time. Since his grandfather's generation,

dogs have always been part of the family. He often helps dogs deliver puppies, is born in the Year of the Dog, and is the typical dog expert. Poren Huang has the refined and sensitive nature of an artist. In addition to his detailed observations of the personality and behaviors of dogs, he is astutely perceptive of the connection between dogs and people in modern society.



Poren Huang *Every Day is a New Start* 38x23x30cm Bronze Gold Foil 2007

Poren Huang was born into a wood carving family. During the time of his grandfather and father, the woodcarving industry in Taiwan was at its peak. Woodcrafts were often exported, and during the heyday, their woodcarving factory had employed more than 100 craftsmen to produce woodcrafts. At that time, they kept many dogs throughout the factory to prevent theft. Hence, Poren Huang grew up among woodcarving and dogs. However, he not only has exquisite carving techniques, but is also born with a keen sense of observation and extraordinary sensitivity, where his appreciation of life is expressed through sculpturing. Therefore, he best understands the difference between crafts and art. After graduating from the Taipei's Fu-Hsin Trade and Arts School Department of Sculpture in 1989, he began his artistic creations and produced works that are most widely discussed. The diversity of ideas and concepts in each and every piece of his work stir bountiful associations in his audience.

However, from the very beginning, Poren Huang's father was firmly opposed to his career in art, and even threatened to sever their father-son relationship. That was because in the past, woodcarving masters had left their factory due to the hardship and poverty of an artist's life. His father did not wish the same mistake on his children, and resorted to the threat in the hope that he would be able to eke out a stable living by continuing in the woodcarving industry. However, Poren Huang's strongly artistic

nature could not be satisfied with the arrangement, and insisted on creative work. Nevertheless, he did not wish to leave his family, and with a positive attitude, quietly set about to create. At the same time, he also participated in many sculpture competitions, and his innumerable awards attracted media interviews and reports, eventually giving his father a peace of mind. Poren Huang Boren uses the dog as his theme to express his tenacious refusal to surrender his creative works while also demonstrating his absolute loyalty to his family by building his family before developing his personal art. His *"I'm Not Happy Now!"*, *"Home"* and *"Generation to Generation"* bronze sculptures are seemingly whimsical, yet they were created during Poren Huang's lowest point in life when his family failed to understand his insistence on art. However, he was neither pessimistic nor resentful, but instead created *"The Dog's Notes"* series that draws smiles from his audience.

"I'm Not Happy Now!" the bronze work offers unlimited imagination. Dogs have personalities and emotions, and are also territorial. However, they do not provoke, but instead want to please humans and desire understanding of their *"I'm Not Happy Now"*. In human interaction, substituting hurt with humor is the best form of communication. It does not create chasm or rift, but instead closes gaps and instills concern. During the time when Poren Huang was creating this piece of work (2005), he was in need of family support and understanding. Although his journey in artistic creation was difficult, he consistently maintained a positive attitude and humorous perspective while diligently taking care of his family. The *"Every Day is a New Start"* (2007) bronze sculpture has a shiny gold layer, and was created when his father was ill and dying. From the perspective of a father, parents want their children to be happy every day, and the smiles of their children bring them the greatest satisfaction. Poren Huang accompanied his father till the very last moment, and grasped that being able to safely awaken to welcome each day is life's greatest gift. It is like basking in the light of dawn, where the heart is full of light. This work is also a satire of the heavily burdened modern life where the heavenly gift of time is not treasured.



Poren Huang *Night Watch* 34×30×44cm Bronze Baking Paint 2008



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

Dogs and humans are not only friends, but also learning partners

Positive attributes characterize Poren Huang's *"The Dog's Notes"*. Although the works differ in styles and patterns, almost every piece pulsates with energy and ambition! The lives of dogs are not long, but they stay tirelessly with its master. In past generations, human lifespan was short, yet it was easy to cherish each day and live a valuable life. In contrast, people today are full of ignoble self-righteousness and complacency, and treat life with such passiveness till confronted with death. In particular, despite the excellent economic comfort of modern life, people are always greedy, calculating and creating burdens for themselves, resulting in mental and emotional insecurity. Life is full of troubles, and negative thinking is inevitable. *"The Dog's Notes"* is a contemporary work that reminds people of the value of positive thinking. The past agricultural society of contentment and strong ethics would not have produced the concepts and works of *"The Dog's Notes"*. The valiant sculpture of *"The Dog's Notes"* bears extraordinary self-confidence and courage for facing a world of information explosion and sheer vastness. The puffed up chest fur of the dogs (e.g. messages and dreams) suggests their indomitable spirit in confronting a multitude of challenges.

"The Loved One" bronze sculpture does not necessarily refer to the children of wealthy families. All parents think that their children are *"The Loved One"*, and provide them with the best care and resources in the hope that they can find happiness and live a better life than the previous generation. Everyone plays the role of *"The Loved One"* to his parents. *"The Loved One"*, with his baby fat and complacency, might not have necessarily squandered away his family resources, but may have instead flourished, and fully demonstrated courage and self-confidence even at a tender age, valiantly facing his life, and is indeed a loved one.



Poren Huang *The Loved One* 37×32×57cm Bronze Silver Foil Gold Foil 2009

Poren Huang Boren employs anthropomorphic sculpturing so that his creations resemble both dog and human. *"The Dog's Notes"* are quite anthropomorphic, and readily resonates strongly with the collectors to become a part of their family. The dog form is used to capture audience attention and evoke the desire to touch. Subsequently, through the interaction, the spirit of the work is realized, and infects those living with it. Interactivity is a major feature of *"The Dog's Notes"*, and Poren Huang encourages collectors or the audience to touch these anthropomorphic works and experience the inner legacy. Therefore, large works of *"The Dog's Notes"* naturally becomes a focal point in public places, attracting unconscious attention and educing the desire to interact and savor. Poren Huang implanted the concept of taking care of the family, positive thinking and fearlessness into his work so that upon interacting with his creations, people discover again and again the profound, intrigue and lasting charm in the artistry of his works. Initial and later sentiments towards *"The Dog's Notes"* often differ, which deeply impresses collectors. It is a feeling of humanity and caring spirit that no amount of external materials can replace.

Interactivity is an attribute that Poren Huang conferred upon his *"The Dog's Notes"* sculptures. Therefore, Poren Huang is very conscientious of the lines and block surfaces of each work, and so meticulous that he finds an error of 0.01% unacceptable. Hence even though his sculpturing studio is huge, he has no assistant. He does not allow the hands of others in his work. To ensure that his creations fully reflect his artistic thoughts and protect their artistry, he does all the work to ascertain that every piece of construction stems from his idea. Poren Huang creates simple external beauty to induce people to interact. However, he also deeply embeds internal beauty into his works so that when people eventually sense his work with their "heart" and no longer with their eyes, they will naturally overlook the amusing appearance. Indeed it is this inner, supreme touching of the spirit that constitutes the eternal value of art. The increased spiritual value that Poren Huang's works give to collectors is boundless. However, the prerequisite is that they must feel and interact with their hearts for the spiritual wealth to come naturally. If the beauty of art is but superficial, it would be fleeting and fade quickly like fireworks. This is like a person who must be full of substance for others to want to continue interacting with him.

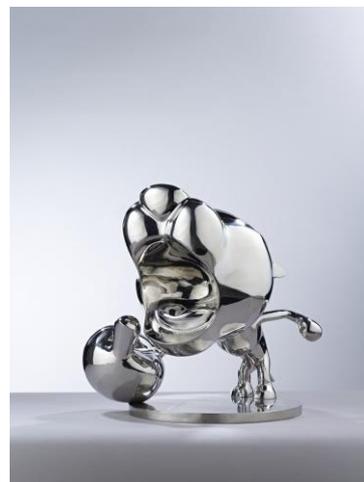
The smile inducing and humor attributes of *"The Dog's Notes"* are especially important in today's modern society of repression and stress. There is no distance between the creation and its audience, which allows them to experience comfortable intimacy with the work and make art a part of their lives. Whether in media commercials or public figures, humor receives immediate favorable responses.

Zero distance between art and life is an important evolutionary process of 20th-century art. Only by involving public participation can art be incorporated into living space and have the opportunity to touch people. Together with the advance in media, people are happy to share art that touches them, thereby accelerating the market visibility of art and creating an undersupply market value. Humorous art can elicit immediate positive feedback while depth remains an indispensable element that makes art indelible in history.

The simplicity, innocence, guilelessness and sincerity of dogs are also featured in *"The Dog's Notes"*. Dogs selflessly follow their masters without demanding rewards. In contrast, perhaps due to living in an era of money and rights, people today secretly pit against each other, and such a fiercely competitive environment results in complicated human relationship that is secretive and calculating. Given such duplicity, people have developed more wariness and protective layers, depriving them of the ability to fully enjoy this transitory life, which in turn affects their families. Poren Huang's *"Happy Time"*, *"What the Heck!"* and *"Little Rascal"* are candid illustrations of innocence. Guilelessness, full enjoyment and contentment in people can alleviate the discrimination between them, and help them focus on the positive behavior of communication and exchanges, thereby creating a friendly atmosphere.



Poren Huang *Happy Time* 90×45×54cm Bronze 2006



Poren Huang *What the Heck!* 28×28×32cm Stainless steel 2010

Modern people can emulate a dog's sense of responsibility, which is a kind of non-selfish thinking. Modern people tend to make excuses, and care only about self-interest at the expense of others. In Poren Huang's *"Night Watch"* bronze sculpture, the moonlight reveals the dog patrolling diligently with steady steps, its body seemingly afloat on wings. In the *"You Cannot Pass!"* bronze sculpture, the

extended claws and arched back reveal readiness to attack, and the completely taut and 100% responsible poise give the protected a sense of security, while *"Sticking to My Post"* and *"My Territory (3)"* model the strongest sense of responsibility. In Poren Huang's *"The Dog's Notes,"* regardless of dog or anthropomorphic forms, each creation is full of reassuring energy, vitality, and the capability of bearing the weightiest responsibility.

Dogs do not judge by appearances, and do not deviate from their value even if their masters suddenly fall ill or lack food. The unshakable loyalty of dogs toward their masters is something that humans can use for self-evaluation. For families, this could be an anchor. Loyal people are naturally responsible, guileless and kind, and create meaningful value in life.

Dogs learn from people. Dogs have long since adapted to human life, becoming socialized to live with and help people. The lives of dogs are short, but they are always spirited. Particularly when humans are in trouble, dogs erupt into courage to defend them and never leaving them for even a moment. Dogs are also human's psychologists. When people are aggrieved or sad, they will always find their dogs welcoming them home with absolute warmth and eagerness. Dogs also sense when their masters are upset, and will quietly stay at their side until their masters feel better. Dogs have already submitted to the lifestyle and emotional state of humans. They have accustomed themselves to become human's best companion, and they remain happy and carefree in their short lives. Dogs are intelligent animals, and in Poren Huang's *"The Dog's Notes"*, they manifest their human characteristics, and seem dogs, yet humans. In Poren Huang's works, the relationship between humans and dogs involves mutual learning. They are both friends and learning partners. Dogs have been socialized, and modern people should also emulate the superior qualities of dogs.

"The Dog's Notes" is consistently "strong". Each creation embodies strong features. For example, in *"Gimme a Hug"*, *"My Territory (2)"* and *"21st Century"*, the dogs do not exhibit any hint of fragility, but are full of confidence with heads held high gazing proudly into the sky. When Poren Huang started on *"The Dog's Notes"*, he was at a low point in his life; yet he cultivated an extraordinary spirit of vivaciousness, positiveness, optimism and courage. *"The Dog's Notes"* is full of originality and purity, giving audience room for boundless imagination and opportunity for unlimited discussions.

Perfect Presentation for International Artists

In 2005, *"The Dog's Notes"* was launched, and has since gathered numerous domestic and

international collectors. Some collectors are attracted by the appearance of the work and others by their investment value, but they quickly become emotionally vested into their collection of *"The Dog's Notes"*, which subtly becomes their emotional sustenance. After a period of interacting with the works, some collectors who had frequently suffered anxiety found their anxiety alleviated, and experience inexplicably pleasure. Therefore *"The Dog's Notes"* is often described as therapeutic art that produces psychological healing. Perhaps "Contentment" would explain that people who are easily satisfied with life and things find sleep easy. Sleep disorder is a common civilized disease, and getting a good night sleep has become a luxury. If a person can put aside all his worries and be content, happy will overflow, and sleep will be as easy as falling off a log. Artworks are not merely ornamental. For example, the paintings of Francis Bacon (1909-1992) and Lucian Michael Freud (1922-2011) are not popularly deemed beautiful, yet they have passed on through generations of history. "Beauty" is slowly uncovered through exploration. It is spiritual and eternal, and offers room for discussion and critique.



Poren Huang *My Territory (3)* 100×80×150cm Bronze 2007



Poren Huang *You Cannot Pass!* 96×48×90cm Bronze 2006

Poren Huang's *"The Dog's Notes"* are collected internationally. It is a common human artistic asset that knows no cultural or racial barrier, and has the ability to touch anyone in the global village. If a creative work can easily cross over racial barriers, it can wield considerable influence. Collectors from different countries interpret the *"New World"* bronze sculpture differently since no two individuals are alike, and every country or region has its own cultural background. Nevertheless, humans have

common emotions and thoughts. A music that crosses ethnicity can connect with the entire human race. Likewise, a creation with no cultural barrier can traverse eras. The sculptures of Swiss artist, Alberto Giacometti (1909-1966) are not narratives of Swiss culture and society, but of all humanity. Hence they are not confined to geography, but attract a large market of collectors from all over the world, and in 2010, his art became the world's most expensive items in public auction. Based on dogs, *"The Dog's Notes"* explores the lack of spirit and tolerance in the modern human, and offers an opportunity for the 7 billion people to be touched in their own way by the perspective in *"The Dog's Notes"*. Expository art does not offer only a single point of view, but is multi-directional to provide room for discussion. A monotonous topic will become "stale", and will naturally be replaced by works that offers more expositions.

Poren Huang's creations have inspired many Western advocates because they realize that the European and US environment can never produce such a unique style birthed by the artist's cultural background. From the perspective of Western art history, several works used the dog as theme, but the works in "Notes" has an entirely new significance. Poren Huang has wholly absorbed his cultural background, and with that as his springboard, he naturally demonstrates a unique style. At the same time, he ponders the negative traits of humanity in contemporary society, and through his most familiar friend, the dog, he crafts his insights into a series of personified creations to explore sober issues in an entertaining way.

"The Dog's Notes" has great variability and diversity, where each piece of work bespeaks its own personality and story. From describing the characteristics of the dogs to their subsequent anthropomorphic forms, in bronze or stainless steel, coated or gold leafed, or in the relationship between dog and panda, the creations are quite exclusive, with only 4 pieces of work per year. Poren Huang uses modeling clay to create countless works each year, but on the average, only 4 creations are consummated into new bronze or stainless steel presentations while others are discarded. Each piece of creation displays the most prominent and unique of performance, yet none loses the required characteristic of *"The Dog's Notes"*, and specifically conveys Poren Huang's artistic perspective of *"The Dog's Notes"*. The humorous, positive, highly interactive and highly educational attributes, and unique body proportions, lines and block structures clearly demonstrate Poren Huang's special sculptural techniques.

Room for Endless Discussions

"The Dog's Notes" promotes admirable traditional Chinese thinking. The doctrine of bringing the family into order is weaved throughout the series, emphasizing ethics. The traditional heritage of upholding resolute courage and confidence, and protecting one's family and property to achieve broader development is applicable to contemporary human behavior. The sculptural technique is a compromise between traditional and contemporary. While almost perfectly conventional, it is also exaggerated in proportion and lends itself to dialogue with people today. If artistic concepts are presented only traditionally, they cannot relate to the lives of people today, and thus incapable of deeply touching its audience. On the contrary, if one is progressive merely for the sake of being progressive, then it is only an attempt at being conspicuous and grandstanding, and like a flash in the pan, quickly sizzles away. Each era of art must connect the past and the future, and the transformation must occur naturally rather than deliberately in order for the creation to remain pure and free of pretentiousness. Highly pure work has no expiration on its enjoyment, for it becomes spiritual and a source of support.



Poren Huang *Contentment* 43x36x23cm Bronze 2011



Poren Huang *Spying* 45x26x69cm Bronze 2007

Art that affords argument can be brought into the future; otherwise, it will remain contemporary and has no future value. After more than a century and a half, people are still discussing Pablo Ruiz Picasso (1881-1973) and Andy Warhol, (1928-1987) because their infinite room for discussion generates the need for discussion into future generations. Poren Huang's "The Dog's Notes" series affords endless discussions and exploration. It is intimately connected to the people in today's world, and is a

"people" related art. The artistic Poren Huang is singularly focused on creating pure art. His absorption allows his work to be completely original and thought provoking, and the philosophy of *"The Dog's Note"* is consistently melded into each piece of his work. A talented artist coupled with a steadfast focus on creating births the opportunity for producing highly artistic work that has infinite room for discussion and everlasting historical value.

Art is absolutely subjective. Everyone is a unique individual, and regardless of natural temperament or nurture, no two exactly identical persons can be found in the world. For a work of art to resonate with a person, it must be attuned with that person. *"The Dog's Notes"* has been launched for 10 years, and has 40 pieces of work offering 40 different perspectives. Each creation has its supporter, which is quite estimable. Chinese art tends to repeat an idea over countless creations, resulting in great similarity among different works. By dispersing a creative force over multiple works, its power is diffused, resulting in the many creations lacking spirit and influence. Poren Huang's *"The Dog's Notes"* tempers the ego. Forty creations represent 40 selves, though self-confidence and courage born of frustrations in a difficult environment remains the constant. However in striving to develop, positive personal qualities must be strengthened. The favorable personality of an artist will safeguard the artistry of each creation because his sense of responsibility will yield perfect creations that bestow upon collectors unparalleled spiritual wealth. Art is spiritual, on which humans can lean. Poren Huang's *"The Dog's Notes"* has brought to countless people a joy that is unmatched by money and material.