



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

Dog Philosophy--Life Revelation of Poren Huang by Chen Fangling

Language is a human communication tool for discerning all things and connecting all things. Yet, while language certainly allows us to quickly understand the meaning of others and help us achieve effective communication, it does not instantaneously instill profound emotional exchanges.

Unlike language in human relationships, animals rely on the sense of dependence accumulated through interaction, observation and companionship; and naturally, such a meeting of soul is beyond the reach of the language so conceitedly acclaimed by humans. As such, the “non-word communication” with animals serves as a different sensory and neurological trigger for the human. Therefore, his past experience and understanding from keeping a large number of the Formosan Dog has convinced Poren Huang that dogs are particularly significant examples, and he hopes to use the imagery of dogs to evoke innate human instinct and genuine emotions. In short, in his “The Dog’s Notes”, Poren Huang intends to urge humankind to reflect on human comedy by using a most solemn but gentle approach.

Miracle—An impossible happiness index

Indeed, everyone hopes to live a life of success, happiness, freedom and hope. Yet, such pure bliss does not come naturally, for fate inevitably lies in wait, and hence humans could but hope, desire and imagine a dream come true. In his book “Negative Dialectics”, 20th century German philosopher Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund Adorno points out that an abstract utopia is an adaptation to the sinister tendencies of reality. Likewise in the creative works of Poren Huang, happiness embodies positive forces and ideas, but does not embroil the moral and political realities of life. In “The Fawner” (2005), while the bent hands before the chest and slightly bent knees express “not wishing to become a fawner”, the posture also represents the act of “battering up someone”. In the same way, in “Snobbery” (2005), the arms crossed over the chest and chin tilted slight upwards arrogantly show the contemptuous side of people. Using canine metaphors as creative expressions, Poren Huang demonstrates Adorno’s admonition that “for the sake of happiness, art should not abandon happiness, and desires should survive through art. ” In his reverse psychology, Poren Huang’s

personification of dogs is suggestive of admonishment, and is consistent with the aesthetic motto of 19th century French writer, Stendhal Dahl: “The promise of happiness” (promesse du bonheur) . However, it should first tell people today that this promise is constantly being broken, such that a real utopia must be achieved from the purely negative.



Poren Huang *The Fawner* 50x49x130 cm Bronze 2005



Poren Huang *Snobbery* 17x23x40 cm Bronze 2005

In “Politics”, ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle divides life into a number of two parts, such as useful and necessary actions versus aesthetic actions. Hence, aesthetic creation is a purely inner state unrelated to reality, and people can derive happiness from arts regardless of life’s realities. In other words, alienation, lack of freedom and sadness in real life can be disregarded in arts—the only mandate of art is to render the hope of a perfect life in abstract form. Poren Huang feels the futility of life’s reality, but upon entering the world of sculpture and wholehearted self-dialogue, the object of creation becomes utterly independent of a vaguely orderly context, and the energy of negative thinking is transformed into delightful forms. This is brought about by Poren Huang’s sculpturing talent for simplifying the complex, which is indeed his creative intent, and by his careful attention to material selection.

Works of art is a form of instructional gesture. On one hand, it is a way for audience to re-understand the world, and on the other hand, it is a way for artists to re-understand their personal media. Regardless, a work of art inevitably points to a certain direction, and whether for the audience or creator, it is a directive aesthetic object. For Poren Huang, “A dog sculpture is an artistic philosophy. From birth, humans are taught to adapt to society and get along with others; this is like keeping a dog where it is taught to obey rules and adapt to the habits of its master. My art is an inspiration and guide for life. At the very least, it is a means for people to believe in the possibility that good might prevail. The distinctive simplification of the complex attempts to demonstrate that the process of polishing a molded sculpture is like the process of domesticating a dog: through repeated strokes and adjustments, it acquires the content of socialization.” The dog sculpture of the artist happens to validate Frankfurt School philosopher Herbert Marcuse, who in the “Art as Form of Reality”, wrote,

"Art is ultimate happiness only within itself; despair is sublimated, and pain becomes beauty." On one hand, through idealization and spiritualization, happiness and pleasure are permitted, and on the other hand, they are vanquished from reality.



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



Poren Huang *Sticking to My Post* 33×42×52 cm Bronze Gold Foil 2007

The Dog as Manifestation of the Artist's Soul

A review of his creative process shows that in the early days, Poren Huang's family did not support his artistic desire. After suffering countless oppression and indifference, he finally received affirmation for his dog-themed creations. Initially, he primarily chiseled vivid behavioral images of dogs on all fours. For example, in "Home" (2005), the bowl is used to associate the relationship between master and pet, and hints at the desire for family warmth; in "You Cannot Pass!" (2006), the stern overtone differentiates the ultimatum of each individual. Gradually, the artist internalizes and endows his images with "non-dog" elements while maintaining recognizable canine forms. For example, in "Happy Time" (2006), the wings mounted on the dog's body expresses the wish to fly unfettered, and in "Sticking to My Post" (2007), the radar embedded in the enlarged ears of the dog not only highlights the acute hearing of the dog, but also emphasizes the connection between dog and human. In other words, Poren Huang's dogs are no longer general portrayal of dogs, but are endowed with human duties and expectations. Thus it seems inevitable that the artist progresses into anthropomorphic creations.

In other works such as "Attending a Banquet" (2006), "The Cowman" (2007) and "Wise Man" (2008), human intentions are portrayed through dogs. In these subversions of traditional human images, the titles not only demonstrate the human society's reliance on dogs, but the vestiges of dog tail and ears expose the artist's life philosophy learned from dogs. However, like the artist's personality, this creative ingenuity remains restrained and subdued at this stage of creativity, and the allusion to social ridicule or criticism is relatively low-key.



Poren Huang *The Cowman* 31x25x61 cm Bronze Gold Foil 2007



Poren Huang *Attending a Banquet* 37x37x90 cm Bronze Gold Foil 2006

Nevertheless, according to the abovementioned Adorno, art impacts society through its redemptive features, shocking experience, a sense of critical detachment, and exploration of current revolutionary insight, for "the core of the problem does not lie in social judgment, but rather in the creation of social theory based on explanations of inner aesthetic attributes of an object or its lack of." A survey of Poren Huang's subsequent personification of dogs, such as "Gimme a Hug" (2007), "My Territory (3)" (2007) and "My Dream" (2009), shows the human-like posturing of the dogs, where the dogs are capable of slouching or walking on their feet and stretch their hands in differing directions. At the same time, the dogs are assuming increasingly adorable and cartoon forms. In "What the Heck!" (2010), "Content" (2011), and new 2014 creations such as "Little Rascal" and "Hello", the dogs have the exaggerated forms of big headed dogs and eloquent expressions. Poren Huang said, "In "The Dog's Note", cuteness is a priority for triggering the instinctive desire to touch. First, it is people's natural delight at the sight of the dog; second, it is the reinstatement of the purpose of sculpturing; and third, like the domestication process of socialization, it is not only the establishment of a connection, but also of reflection."

Compared to realistic portrayals, Poren Huang thinks that reducing the cumbersome lines and irregular surfaces of a body can enhance and strengthen its spirit and presence. "Portraying my unique dog image and orientation is most important. I like simple and clean lines. It's more compatible with modern spirit, and befitting the streamlined designs of a technological society." In other words, the significance of the simple and cute cartoon version of the Formosan Dog lies in the abbreviation of its features into a more general depiction. However, the artist remains rich in his descriptions of details and outlines, and in addition to its expressions, the dog's body language is included in the portrayal of the dog's attentiveness. The diversity of muscular changes with emotions, such as in the paws, flesh, spine, tails and ears, precisely bespeak certain affects. In other words, it is not a merely a cartoon version and removal of characteristics, but rather a compromise between cartoon version and reality.



Poren Huang *Generation to Generation* 45×17×30 cm Bronze 2005



Poren Huang *Hold You Dear* 24×26×62 cm Bronze 2006

In darkness will be light; in stillness, dancing. (Note)

Poren Huang indicates that the creation of these dogs is a transcription of personal feelings, and a sentiment evoked by the evolution of modern society. Hence from the progression of his sculptures over the last decade, an autobiography-like narrative is evident. These sculptures are in fact portraits of his repeated concern about human practicality and social development, and the turning point in his personal mindset. Gradually, the self-ridicule when disheartened and embracing the world when encouraged can now be let go regardless of joy or grief. "In contrast to human intrigue, dogs are benevolent and generous toward humans," and from such observations of dogs, Poren Huang learned the philosophy of dogs.

Being cute is not confined to being lovable. The various bearings of dogs or their encounters with other objects (such as representation of China's panda, or the silver spoons and gold bottle symbolic of wealth) not only inspire human imagination (though mostly veiled), but are worldly admonishments planted within the humorous ingenuity. Under the demand of a meticulous production process, the creation is a metonymy of realistic allegory fable and human comedy, and a way for the artist to motivate himself to survive through creating.

Herein, the dog is akin to a work of art, a mirror that reflects the things of the world.

In the face of rapid technological development, we become emotionally alienated. As a member of the animal kingdom, our affections must interact with another species to develop a compassionate soul. Specifically, the human partner is no longer simply another human, but more often than not, even since ancient times, it is life with another species. According to Poren Huang, "Since ancient times, the oldest human companion has been the dog," thus implying that in addition to dependence on and affection for the dog, there are underlying layers of unavoidable human contention for survival and resources. In his creative process, Poren Huang's command of techniques has elevated such inevitability to an aesthetic revelation that blesses all people. It is not the gallant tears mourning reality, but the magnanimous understanding that all things are but the outcome of karma, such as a pet dog welcoming its master. In the spirit of dedication, "The Dog's Notes" attempts to give the audience energy to once again face the world.

[Notes]

Excerpt from TS Eliot poem collection, "Four Quartets".