

## People of the 21<sup>st</sup> century can't compare with dogs? By Powen Lee

What does Poren Huang mean when he says “people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century can't compare with dogs”?

Even when unfed or abused by its moody owners, a dog will wholeheartedly protect them, eagerly greet them when they return, and dutifully stick to its post until the day it falls to sickness. By stark contrast, people may go so far as to break family ties over financial issues and never see each another once again. As they are lost in a 21st century world of economic abundance, people are actually worse than dogs and can certainly learn from them for their sincerity, loyalty and enthusiasm.

Huang, a Dog in the Chinese zodiac, once cared for more than 20 dogs and sometimes had to deliver his own puppies, making him indeed a dog expert. In fact, since his grandfather's time Huang's family has always enjoyed the company of man's best friends. “The Dog's Notes,” a series launched in 2005, is Huang's response to the predicament of contemporary people facing various tests of morality as they prosper. With sculptures of human-like dogs, the series is an artist's creative endeavor of viewing dogs as a role model for, and inspiration to, their human companions.

Huang's sculptures are brimming with courage and confidence, often portraying an upright and vigorous dog. Later works from “The Dog's Notes” appear with a higher degree of personification, conveying Huang's belief in mutual learning between humans and dogs, especially in today's society. As they live in an affluent environment, people become even more vulnerable to stress and thus suffer from mood swings or depression at a first sign of trouble. Dogs, by comparison, are always cheerful companions to their owners; even when humans are too upset to pay attention to them, dogs will always wait with sincerity for their human best friends to feel better, with no grudges held.

In some later pieces from “The Dog's Notes,” a dog is found accompanied by a panda, provoking discussion and sometimes even controversies. Viewers are entitled to interpret the interaction between the two animals in their own way, be it cooperative or competitive. Although the dog looks tiny next to the panda, its extraordinary vigor makes it even more eye-catching. People tend to respond to this series with a knowing smile together with a desire to touch and connect with the works, which are often considered therapeutic and highly enriching. This positivity affects people who interact with the sculptures, as they always want to take one more look at the amusing and exaggerated gestures.

The thought-provoking artworks from “The Dog's Notes” stimulate discussion easily. Unlike what the title may suggest, it is not really the dogs that Huang emphasizes; rather, what Huang is trying to address through these sculptures is issues such as the meaning and value of life and what attitude one should adopt reflecting upon life's impermanent nature. As material conditions have improved, people in the modern world have fewer opportunities for self-exploration or pondering over the meaning of life. Thus, under the glamour lies always an unknown heart of scarcity that panics.

“The Dog's Notes” is a spiritually nourishing series - especially to those who constantly communicate with the works. After spending some time with the sculptures, collectors will not only perceive the sheer materiality but find infinite possibilities for conversation and exploration in the artist's creations. This positive, pleasant experience can be gained as long as one ceases to view the art pieces as ornaments, and the reward is a spiritual richness that the material world cannot otherwise provide.

Huang has been making art for more than two decades. He has held numerous exhibitions with works collected by several museums.



*Happy Time*, 90×45×54cm, Bronze, 2006



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