

# CHRIS HUEN SIN-KAN & HIS VENTURE INTO THE FUTURE 禰善勤：探索未來之路

Chris Huen Sin-kan, one of the emerging artists in the territory born in 1991, may not have an extensive portfolio under his belt, just yet. The theme of his works and the way in which he presents it radiate an enthusiasm and curiosity about the world, like a breath of fresh air within today's cynical society. Whilst so many people of his age are still drifting through life, Huen has been driven to ruminate on the fundamentals of life and to express his views through art.

The *Birding Series* depicts this young artist's desire to understand the world. The series is a collection of paintings of "a big year" – an informal competition for amateur birders to see or hear the largest number of species of birds within a single calendar year and within a specific geographical area. After learning about the contest from books and a movie, Huen – who has an ardent interest in birdwatching – was intrigued by this unorthodox way of living. To create art surrounding a big year, the artist first looked into what it was all about. He retrieved the information from a blog of the American Birding Association where birders share their stories and experiences, and then injected his own take of the event into his paintings. The titles of the series are formed by two components – "Birder" and the bird species. The paintings generally show a birder with a pair of binoculars while, interestingly, the birds are invisible to viewers. "The birder tries to observe the birds while I try to observe the birder and his or her activities," Huen explains.

a big year raised two main questions for Huen: why had he been previously oblivious to this event, and why do birders spend their precious time and money documenting the number of bird species – an act that does not seem to yield substantial monetary gains except for an informal title? The first question made Huen come to realisation that, in his early twenties, there are a lot of things that he is still clueless about and he took the initiative to look into it. The second question, on the other hand, prompted him to unravel a mentality that is not aligned with our social norms, which tends to prioritise productivity and profitability above all. For the green artist, a big year has amply demonstrated the numerous possibilities of life.

In fact, Huen has taken the path less travelled by people in their twenties. Having graduated from the Department of Fine Arts at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, he has since been working as an assistant to Lam Tung-pang, an established artist in Hong Kong. Huen does not appear to doubt the path he has chosen. For a person who has displayed a profound interest in painting and drawing since his third year at primary school, art as a profession appears to be the natural choice.

When he was a P3 student, Huen started to take drawing lessons at a piano centre that also ran other interest classes. Whilst other students could not sit still for the one or two hour-long lesson and dashed out of the classroom once it wrapped up, Huen would stay there from 10am to 6pm. In



*Me In Tung Chau Street Park*  
2013  
Oil on 9 canvas  
420 x 420 cm



*The Big Year, Birder and Blue Heron*  
2013  
Oil on canvas  
220 x 160 cm





**Chris Huen Sin-kan**

Born in 1991 in Hong Kong, Huen studied at the Fine Arts Department of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. In 2010, he set up a studio in Tai Kok Tsui and works as an assistant to Lam Tung-pang. Huen works primarily in painting, producing work that engages with the ideas of forgettable daily experiences and passions. His work has been featured in exhibitions in Hong Kong since 2010.



retrospect, he believes that he was not gifted with a flair of drawing, but rather he was just driven by the instinct to polish his drawing skills so that what he drew would be more like what he beheld. His passion for painting propelled him to major in fine arts at university and he never had second thoughts about it when he filled out the Joint University Programmes Admissions System (JUPAS) application. Even his family showed unwavering faith in him as they had seen his dedication towards art, and he proved his ability by gaining As at both HKCEE and A-Level. Huen got what he wished for, and was enrolled at the Department of Fine Arts of the Chinese University. During these three years of tertiary education, he absorbed courses on art history and art theory like a sponge. Not in the least put off by the theoretical nature of such courses, he sees them as windows that allowed him to make sense of art in a more comprehensive way. In addition, they trained him in visual sense and mindset.

When asked why his works are primarily paintings, Huen asserts, "For me, painting is the purest way to present the truth. Actually, its nature is similar to that of writing as I just narrate my perceptions of the world and the truth in the most direct manner and I can do it with much ease." He adds that painting is a form of art most in line with his current circumstances. Despite this, the budding artist does not box himself in. Paradoxically, his favourite artists are not painters as he is more drawn to different ways of creating art. He states that he may bring new elements into his work at a later stage.

Many doubt if Hong Kong provides a thriving environment for artists. Huen adopts a rather more positive outlook than the public's grim view of the art world in the territory. "With the large number of galleries, competitions and hotel art fairs, I see opportunities for green artists like me." In 2013, he partook in the joint exhibition *Detached Oeuvre* with Michelle Lee Ho Wing at Amelia Johnson Contemporary.

Huen reveals that the plants in his studio in Tai Kok Tsui have become a significant theme in his new works, as well as the two stray dogs he rescued. It is clear to see from his works that his surroundings provide inspiration to create. His paintings do not simply reflect what he sees, but are also infused with his ideas. As he himself says, paintings are "extensions of my life". While immersed in the surroundings, he employs the five senses to feel. In the process of creation, he must understand and filter out the distractions in order to get to the essence of his wealth of feelings. For instance, a recurring theme in his work relates to the relationship between humans and nature. In his opinion, one of the most mind-boggling scenarios is how humans destroy nature to make room for city development and yet, at the same time, build recreational parks to bring green back into the city. Similarly, growing plants at home or at the workplace is another artificial way for humans to quench their desire to feel closer to nature – a desire that he believes is a universal longing deeply rooted in each one of us.





*The Imagined and Temporary Life*  
2012  
Oil on canvas  
160 x 360 cm

Whilst some young artists are inclined to catch the viewer's attention by creating bold or edgy-looking art or strive to shake up the viewer's world, Huen has steered away from this approach. He hopes that his paintings embody a sense of lightness, so light that they will only cause the viewer's heart to flutter. After leaving the exhibition, the viewer should not be too worked up about what they have seen. "It's more like a film or a performance. It is not too significant in one's life and it's just a happening at a particular time." Having had a taste of the art scene in Hong Kong, Huen, unlike some of his counterparts, has not let the obscure future daunt him or make him bitter. "Some people I know have begun whining when things have not panned out the way they planned and some even have reached despair. I have just started out and I think it's crucial I keep the flame within me burning. The art scene in Hong Kong is far from saturated. Many artists and mentors have expressed that it is hard for them to get the right people to assist in their projects. So I believe opportunities abound."

Perhaps Huen is not intent on becoming one of those artists who achieve success overnight, as reflected in his soft and rather low-key paintings. But it is not difficult to see that he is mentally prepared for the ride ahead and he has already taken steps to find a place for himself in the local art scene. He has no idea how far he can go, but at least he is venturing into the possibility of not compromising passion for reality.



*The Big Year, Birder and Black-legged Kittiwake*  
2013  
Oil, Watercolour on canvas  
160 x 200 cm

*The Big Year, Birder and Bonaparte Gull*  
2012  
Oil, Watercolour on canvas  
200 x 160 cm





The Big Year, Bird and Scarlet Tanager  
2013  
Oil on canvas  
180 x 140cm

出生於1991年的本地新晉藝術家裨善勤，雖然尚未有太多代表作，但其作品中鮮明的主題與表達形式，都充分流露出他對世界的好奇和熱忱，彷彿混濁社會中的一口新鮮空氣。當同齡的人很多還在人生路上浪蕩的時候，裨已反思了不少與生命有關的問題，並以藝術形式表達他的所思所感。

《觀鳥大年》這一系列畫作，表現裨善勤對世界的好奇。這一系列創作源於他參加的一項觀鳥業餘比賽——「觀鳥大年」，在一整年的比賽期間，觀鳥愛好者於某個地區觀察雀鳥，記錄得最多鳥的種類者則獲勝。當他從書本和電影中得知這項比賽後，本身熱愛觀鳥的他，被這種特殊的生活方式深深吸引。

為創作「觀鳥大年」的相關的作品，裨善勤首先做了詳盡的資料搜集。他翻閱了美國觀鳥協會的資料，並把自己的想法注入作品中，並以觀鳥者及鳥類名稱命名。每幅畫作呈現的都是拿著望遠鏡觀鳥的人而不見其所觀之鳥。他解釋說：「觀鳥者觀鳥，我卻觀察觀鳥之人及他們的一舉一動。」

創作「觀鳥大年」系列的過程中，引發他思考兩個問題：一是為何他之前對這項活動毫無所知呢？二是觀鳥人士為何花上那麼多寶貴時間和金錢記錄雀鳥品種？此舉最多只會給他們冠上一個可有可無的名銜，不見得會為他們帶來什麼可觀收入。第一個問題顯然讓他明白到，二十出頭的他還有許許多多事情未曾見識，因此他主動探究究竟；第二個問題卻讓他參透了個人生存之道，縱然跟利字當頭、實際為先這些社會常規背道而馳，「觀鳥大年」對這個資歷尚淺的藝術家來說，無疑展現了生命的無限可能。

事實上，裨善勤選擇了一條與同齡人很不同的道路。在香港中文大學藝術系畢業後，他一直做藝術家林東鵬的助手。他對於自己選擇的道路沒有絲毫猶豫，從事藝術對他來說似乎是最自然不過的事，因為打從小學三年級，他已發現自己對繪畫的濃厚興趣了。

當時，他在一間開設許多興趣班的琴行學畫。大部份的小朋友都很難在一兩個小時的興趣班裡坐得住，一下課便衝出課室，裨善勤卻能從早畫到晚。回想起來，他認為自己並非什麼畫畫奇才，只是本能地不停畫而練出一手好畫技，才能隨心所欲揮筆成畫。

醉心繪畫的他進大學時理所當然地選了藝術系，選科時他沒有絲毫猶豫，家人眼見他對藝術的熱忱，也寄予十足信心，而他也不負眾望在高考和會考取得甲等優異成績。他如願以償獲香港中文大學藝術系取錄，三年大學生涯當中，他如饑似渴地吸收藝術歷史和理論等知識，對理論學說非旦沒有一丁點兒反感，反而將之看成釐清藝術思維的

一個好機會，在三年的學習裡更訓練了他的視覺鑑賞力和思維模式。

被問及創作為何以繪畫為主，他強調：「對我來說，繪畫是呈現真相最單純的方法。就像寫作，以最直接及自己最容易拿捏的方式去描述我對世界的看法及其真貌。」他補充道，繪畫是目前最適合他近況的藝術表達方式。但這位後起之秀並沒有故步自封，相反他最欣賞的藝術家也不是畫家，由此可見他喜愛不同的藝術創作方式，他也表示將來會將新元素注入作品當中。

很多人質疑香港是否是一個培育藝術家的好地方，裨善勤對此抱著比大眾更樂觀的心態。「大量的香港畫廊、比賽及酒店藝術展等給了多數像我一樣的年輕藝術家更多展示的機會。」事實上，去年他跟李可穎舉辦了名為「Detached Oeuvre」聯合畫展，今年2月，也將舉行首個個展並展出新作。

裨善勤透露新作會以他大角咀工作室中的植物為主題，從他的作品中不難看出周遭環境是他的靈感泉源，畫作不但反映他所見的，更滲出他所想的——正如他自己闡釋一樣，畫作是他生命的延伸。他以五大感官來探索四週環境，深入其中體驗感受，去蘊存菁創作出血結晶。

人類和大自然之間的關係一直是裨善勤的創作主題，他認為最可怕的景象，就是人們為了市區發展摧毀大自然，但與此同時人們亦透過建設公園將一點翠綠帶回城市裡。人們渴望接近大自然，於是在家中或辦公室中栽種植物，而這份渴望本來就深深地植根在我們的心裡。

青年藝術家大多傾向於大膽創作或標奇立異，來刺激觀眾的感官世界，吸引他們的注意，而裨善勤則別樹一格。他希望畫作能讓人感覺到一份輕，輕得讓觀眾的一顆心能躍然飄起；他也希望觀眾離開展場的時候，不會因為展覽所見而心情沉重。「就像一齣戲或一場表演，在生命中算不上舉足輕重，只是某個瞬間發生的一件事罷了。」

身為藝壇一份子，初試啼聲的裨善勤，並沒有像其他本地藝術家一樣，為前景未明而感到惶惑不安。「我認識一些人，際遇未如理想便開始抱怨，甚至絕望。而我才剛剛開始，保持心裡那團火很重要。香港藝術市場還未飽和，很多藝術工作者都表示很難找到人才協助他們。因此我相信還有很多機會。」

也許，裨善勤沒有一夜成名的野心，這個從他低調柔婉的畫風中看得出來，但他已為未來的旅程作好準備，決心在本地藝壇爭一席位。在藝術探索的路上，他不知道能夠走多遠，但至少可以肯定，不會因為現實而捨棄創作的熱誠。