

Yue Minjun, The Chinese Clown

By Julien Beauhaire (translated by Lauren Hasty)

Yue Minjun's dark laughter

Can we laugh at everything? Laugh to death? Renowned Chinese artist Yue Minjun, indirectly answers these questions in his work often described as "cynical realism". The Cartier Foundation is currently showing Minjun's first major European retrospective, revealing forty large canvases in a colorful show that offers the Middle Kingdom to the world market. Farewell socialist realism, hello stereotypical laughter. Laughter to the point of tears?



Portrait of Yue Minjun in his studio, Beijing, May 2007 © Yue Minjun. Photo courtesy Yue Minjun Studio

The portraits convey an obvious caricature of the ridiculous uniformity of Chinese society to the point it becomes laughable, often accentuated by graphic repetition. Be sure to check out *Execution* (1995), a

parity of the death of Emperor Maximilian of Mexico by Manet (1868) with a Forbidden City backdrop. Yue Minjun is undoubtedly a real Chinese clown.



Yue Minjun, *The Execution*, 1995. Oil on canvas, private collection © Yue Minjun

At the Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art until March 17th, 2013.

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