

The image behind the image

For my comeback to an art fair, I responded positively to Paul Kusseneers' invitation to have a stand in his "Solo Project" in the former football stadium area in the St. Jakobshalle in Basel, where I attended the famous 'Switzerland-Italy' match on 23 June, 1954, in Basel. All the players' magic names like Parlier, Ballaman, Vonlanthen, Fatton - I was there! And this is a wonderful opportunity to return...

I have always compared sport with art and gastronomy. You forge the skills and the 'art' of willpower and life in sport. I have always thrown myself into my professions with a passion and led an exciting professional life. I have a strong connection with Basel and owed it to myself to come back this year, outside the high temple of Super Shopping Halls which have completely overtaken us and whose hegemony I certainly played a role in creating. So this comeback is essential today before fixing any new projects for 2014.

This exhibition is a true concept that we shall be presenting for the whole week. I wanted it to be cultural in a venue where visitors would come especially for it.

People will have to make the effort to go out of their way to come and nothing is more inspiring than leaving the beaten track : that's where you meet the most interesting people and, as is often the case, it's definitely worth the 'get-away'.

Both artists exhibited are remarkable painters with very similar childhoods spent in difficult political and cultural contexts.

Jörg Immendorff "The Master". He has had a decisive influence on German painting and artists such as among others *Kippenberger, Lüpertz, Messe, Oehlen, A.R.Penck*. But Immendorff was the German artist most marked by his country's recent history and transformation.

Mao Yan. I discovered this artist in Nanjing in 2006, when I created the SH Contemporary Fair ; he fascinated me with his talent and perfectionism. I bought two paintings from him at the time but he hung on to them for two years because he couldn't bring himself to part with them. He needed them in order to progress along the pathway of his work. Mao Yan is part of the second generation of Chinese artists, just after the opening of the country. He is the link between the first historic 'reference' generation and the free, risk-taking generation, today's third generation that has blossomed independent and full of ideas in our globalized world.

Both these artists' work stretches far beyond painting, thus proving that painting itself, in all its forms, is here to stay and certainly not on the point of vanishing into the whirlwind of modernity and the extreme commercialization of an excess of "Kleenex art".

All these artists, galleries, collectors, curators and museum directors remind me of the world of World Cup Skiing, the same frenzy... From fair to fair, week after week, producing and commercializing works to 'feed' a greedy market. Would these events be so successful if the market hadn't grown into what it is today? A good question. One thing is certain : in life, art, fashion, advertising, films, sport and elsewhere, many are called but few are chosen - life proves this every day. Thankfully, only history and time will tell.

Pierre Huber, May 2012