

Facing page: *Parfum de Révolte*,
HONG KONG, Jedd Novatt.

**ART REPUBLIK LOOKS AT A WORLD
TAINTED BY COMMERCIALISATION
THROUGH THE PERCEPTIVE EYES OF
YVES HAYAT. BY TYEN FONG**

The World We Live In

The transition from the advertising world to the art world was a natural process for French artist Yves Hayat. Working in the creatively effervescent field of advertisement design, he gained a fascination for images and the importance of their messages. His art speaks to the state of the world – one that is dominated by icons, brands, luxury and violence.

Originally from the Egypt, Hayat first developed his aesthetic sensibilities living in a country enriched with history and cultural diversity. Art was his first love. In 1956, Hayat uprooted and left for France after discovering it. For five years, he studied decorative arts at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Nice. In 1973, Hayat chose to go into advertising and marketing, which led him to open his own agency. This creative trade captivated Hayat. During his career as an advertising designer, he photographed people, the streets, museums, paintings, and had access to classified magazines and web images for his work. His experience in the field also enabled him to discover and learn to use new forms of technologies, and to master his techniques. Equipped with these skills, he decided to return to the arts in the 1990s. While running his successful advertising business, Hayat would exhibit his artwork in galleries. Soon, his secondary activity of creating art took precedence over his profession of advertisement designing, which he practiced up till 2002. He has since created and showcased his artworks in various galleries in France. Although he does not consider himself a painter or designer, he is widely known as a 'plasticien', a term that refers to an artist who puts the meaning of his work to the fore and uses all the various media artistic expression, all the techniques and supports, to express it.


Hayat admits to focusing more on manipulating reality than recording it. His artwork, between photography, installation and 'figurative narrative', proposes visions where theatricalisation and exaggeration play major roles. "I am a total visual consumer: I film, download, scan, retouch... as the director of a new reality", explains the artist on his website. Using superimpositions, shifts, and misappropriation to compose his images, he confronts the viewer with his 'new reality' – one that holds elements of the past and present, luxury and violence, indifference and fanaticism. He seeks to incite philosophical questioning about the human condition – prominently the violence and destruction that exists in today's world. His works present a range of universal themes such as fame, passion, war, sex and death.

For his recent works, the titles he assigns to them (such as 'Business must go on', 'Parfum de Révolte' and 'les Icones sont fa-tiguées') as well as the appearance of familiar advertising slogans, have the effect of giving a meaning to the pollution of our everyday lives. They reflect the collective identity and 'brand' of today's commercialised and superficial society. Hayat's works are not a celebration of barbarity, but rather the fascination created by human ambivalence about what is real and what is illusory.

In 'Business must go on' (2012), Hayat presents a hypothetical world overrun by multinational corporations, and where human life is absent. The rise of globalisation, and the spread of multi-national corporations, has shaped the world. Large companies, such as the ubiquitous Nike, McDonald's, Apple, and other major brands have sanitised our towns and city centers, replacing places of the past that hold identity and history. These indestructible multinationals have conquered the world, influencing our dreams, desires and tastes. Hayat confronts us with this reality in this series, bringing us into a lifeless world where the large companies are the only ones left intact, and where we fail to recognise the chaos that globalisation, standardisation and sterilisation bring.

Also a politically committed artist, Hayat's other recent work 'Parfum de Révolte' (2013) presents a mirror to the global political unrest, specifically the turmoil in the Middle East. He started this series because he wanted to explore the western nation's true intentions for launching wars with the Middle East. Their actions were largely motivated by financial gain and to impose capitalism. While other artists choose graphic literal forms and language to comment on the Arab Spring, Hayat chose the Chanel No.5 bottle, an iconic image, as the subject of his series. Each object features an outlined image of a sculpted Chanel bottle with places such as Baghdad, Kabul, Homs, Istanbul (or other places experiencing political unrest) printed on the bottle. Despite the beauty and desirable qualities of the Chanel bottles, the objects take on a far more sinister personality with its clean, unobstructed font. With elegance and subtlety, Hayat expresses these various forms of colonisation using recognisable imagery, and allows the viewer to complete the narrative without a single superfluous word. The idea of his work is to make the world aware that we should look at the real picture, and not at what our governments want us to see.

Hayat however does not exactly try to deliver a message with each piece. He instead attempts to make a record of society in which we have generated, transformed and destroyed. He then leaves the viewers free to their own interpretation and feelings. Hayat presents critical questions about art, politics and media relations through conceiving a nuanced artwork where the attraction for the culture of media, cinema and advertising is expressed. His pieces confront us with ourselves – makes us aware, disturbs us and sometimes, even makes us smile.

Represented by Mark Hachem Gallery, a selection of Yves Hayat's works will be featured at Art Stage Singapore 2015. 

For more information regarding the artist or his works, please visit www.markhachemgallery.com or www.hayat-art.com