

VILLEPIN

The Loss of Human Face?

June 2 – November, 2022

G-2/F, 53-55 Hollywood Road

Central, Hong Kong



Francis Bacon, *Studies for a Portrait of John Edwards*, 1984, oil on canvas, 101.6 x 63.5 cm

Throughout art history, from the works of Rembrandt to Modigliani, Van Gogh and Freud, the human face has long been both a source of attraction and repulsion, an expression of humanity and fraternity but also portrayed with primitive violence and savagery. Across all its figurative and abstract representations, the portrait has been used as a mirror to the world.

The Loss of Human Face? will feature masterpieces by **Francis Bacon** in dialogue with contemporary artists **Adrian Ghenie**, **Zeng Fanzhi**, **George Condo**, and **Yukimasa Ida**. Over the past few months, the Villepin team has been working closely with researchers and curators around the world to bring together this exhibition that expresses how artists have used the human face to reflect the truths behind the visage of humanity. Accompanying this exhibition, Villepin will publish a catalogue including texts and essays by prominent curators and contributors including Didier Ottinger, Deputy Director of Centre Pompidou, Edwin Becker, Head of Exhibitions at Van Gogh Museum, and Dominique de Villepin.

Igniting a conversation between the past and the present, the exhibition explores the significance of human faces as seen through these five artists. Showcasing twenty major works in a transformed gallery space, visitors will be confronted with the bold canvases of these artists displayed in dialogue with each other. As one of the most influential portrait painters of the early 20th century, Francis Bacon sets the scene for the exhibition as his raw and unsettling canvases distort his subject's faces while unveiling

their inner psychologies. Ghenie's portraits are likewise contorted in gestural brushstrokes to reexamine our collective history and memory, while works from Zeng's 'Mask' series depict the social tensions and anxieties the artist observed in modern China. Conversely, Condo's characters are rendered flat on the picture plane in grotesque and whimsical configurations, and Ida's thickly painted canvases continue the historic medium with a futurist perspective. This exhibition will also be the first presentation of Ida's work in Hong Kong. All these artists bring their contribution to the global understanding of what humanity means. Through their diversity and varied backgrounds, they reveal the intense rage, anxiety, passion, and ambition of our current time through their own unique visions.

In this contemporary moment, this exhibition ultimately aims to pose the question: are we still able to decipher the human face, when it is vanishing behind masks, disguising its expressions, and disappearing behind screens of this technological age? Following the footsteps of Villepin's previous exhibitions from *Zao Wou Ki: Friendship and Reconciliation* to a survey of the New School of Paris with *The Art of Hope*, this exhibition continues Villepin's mission and commitment to presenting art to the public as a bridge to deeper understanding and meaningful engagement with one another.

"In a world beset by war, crisis and a pandemic, many are overcome by fear and anxiety. As a gallery, we wanted to question how art can help us navigate new paths to hope. Bringing together this exceptional group of artists, we invite visitors to come face to face with the distortion, destruction, and metamorphosis of their portraits that stand as a flag to humanity. These works challenge us to reflect on our own fears and aspirations, revealing new ways of understanding ourselves and each other in this fragmented world." – **Arthur de Villepin**, Chairman and Co-founder of Villepin.



Adrian Ghenie, *On the Road to Tarascon 2*, oil on canvas, 210 x 160 cm;
Zeng Fanzhi, *Mask Series No. 26*, 1995, oil on canvas, 200 x 180 cm



George Condo, *Multicolored Portrait*, 2014, acrylic, charcoal and pastel on linen, 128.3 x 108cm;
Yukimasa Ida, *Bob*, 2022, oil on canvas, 194 x 164cm

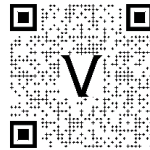
NOTES TO EDITORS

About Villepin

Shaped by Dominique and Arthur de Villepin's passion for art, Villepin is a new gallery model created by collectors for collectors. Founded in 2019 in Hong Kong, Villepin is specialized in selected important artists, estates and foundations, advocating their work through carefully curated exhibitions while bridging them with the leading collectors and institutions in the Asia-Pacific region and around the world. Beyond its gallery walls, Villepin also acts as curator for exhibitions in museums and institutions.

Each exhibition at Villepin is based on in-depth scholarship and offers a unique experience to immerse visitors in the life and art of each artist. Previous exhibitions have also produced special bilingual publications that include original essays and curatorial research. Artists presented by Villepin include Zao Wou-Ki, Myonghi Kang, Pierre Soulages, Georges Mathieu and Hans Hartung among others.

As curator and advisor to a close community of collectors, Villepin is focused on education and promoting scholarship of its artists through intimate salons and collaborations with leading institutions, foundations, universities and museums. Through their extensive experience in building close friendships with artists, the father-son partnership aims to share their expertise, encourage dialogue, and support collectors in building long-lasting relationships with artists, who are at the heart of Villepin's initiatives.



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