

# Liquid diet

Yeo Chee Kiong's dining room installation includes a table that is more about water than food

deepika shetty

It is a dining table, but do not think the word "eat", think "art" instead. Six round Chinese antique tables have been sawn up to create one long table. This has been painted black and layered with chemical epoxy to make it waterproof.

At first it looks as though the table has a glass top, but this is, in fact, water. A lone white plate floats on it.

The piece, provoking questions about objects and their functions, is the work of award-winning artist and sculptor Yeo Chee Kiong (right), known for his visual puns. It is part of a dining room with a difference titled *Black Banquet*, and is Yeo's first site-specific installation in a commercial gallery.

The "room" features 21 works including the table, stools and a wall display, and is on at Richard Koh Fine Art till April 3.

The work stems from Yeo's interest in the function of everyday objects. This time, he has played around with a dining

room setting, where people usually sit around a table and talk over a meal. This table is definitely a talking point as the viewer is left wondering what its purpose is.

The 41-year-old artist tells Life!: "The idea was to turn antique Chinese tables into a long Western table. Water was added to get a play on darkness and shadows, and present something unexpected for the viewer."

The water filling up the table renders it almost useless as a normal dining table – just what the artist was after.

"If it cannot function as one, the question I ask is can it still be considered a dining table? This is what contemporary art tries to do. It seeks to provoke, to raise questions for which there are no straight answers," he says.

He likes crossing boundaries in art and is uncompromising in its pursuit. He has turned down commissions where he was asked to alter his concepts or the size of his work.

He admits his work is "not easily collectible". *Black Banquet* costs \$52,000, though for buyers looking for something smaller, there are prints at \$950.

The Johor-born artist, who studied at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, also teaches part-time at his alma mater. In 2004, he did his Master of Fine Arts course at the Glasgow School of Art.

The artist, who started his career



Young Artist Award. In 2008, he beat nine other artists from the region to win the inaugural Asia-Pacific Breweries Foundation Signature Art Prize for his piece titled *A Day Without A Tree*.

The conceptual artwork, a comment on global warming, looked as though someone had spilt milk at the Singapore Art Museum, with the museum's pillars seemingly melting to form a puddle.

When asked if there was more recognition after bagging one of the region's biggest art prizes, he says with a laugh: "One must learn not to take these things too seriously. I still work as hard as I used to and remain focused on my art."

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**Crossing boundaries:** Artist Yeo Chee Kiong's new artwork (above), a dining table made up of six round Chinese antique tables and filled with water, leaves viewers wondering what purpose it serves. ST PHOTOS: CAROLINE CHIA

view it

## BLACK BANQUET

Where: Richard Koh Fine Art, 71 Duxton Road  
When: Till April 3, 11.30am - 7pm (Wed to Fri), noon - 6pm (Sat and Sun). Closed on Mon and Tue, tel: 6221-1209  
Admission: Free  
Info: Go to [www.rkfineart.com](http://www.rkfineart.com)

# 黑色宴会上 的长桌

素，可圆形的中国桌椅摇身变成西方才有的长形桌子，哪里还有什么矛盾和冲突？可这几张仿古花梨木明清古典桌椅出现时，一切被化解了——明清古典桌椅本来是非常东方的文化因素，这些纯黑桌椅，构成阿拉伯数字“808”的图案。东方和西方站在一起，本来充满矛盾和冲突，本地雕塑家杨子强的装置艺术展中有一件作品，很巧妙地把创意放在几张仿古花梨木明清古典桌椅

杨子强装置艺术展



报道 / 吴启基  
摄影 / 龙国雄

现在谈到艺术的创作和观赏时，更多人倾向于作品的真假和多义。也就是应用了语言学家或者哲学家们挂在嘴边的“所指”和“能指”。

“所指”和“能指”之后，作品本身的东西方属性被模糊了，作品功能也成为灰色地带。不固定、不明确是一大特色，同时也达到一个个不同的理解层次和一次次的不同审美趣味。而当东方和西方站在一起时，两者会碰撞出怎样的艺术火花？

按传统观点，“所指”是语言学家或哲学家们试图通过语言表达出来的东西，而语言实际传达出来的东西叫“能指”。我们说，好的艺术作品都是多义的，也许因为多义，因此无法定义。雕塑家杨子强所展出的作品，可说是多义中的多义。

杨子强的创作灵感，部分来自自己喜欢阅读的漫画，也受法国著名现象学思想的影响。杨子强创作的多义，通常是作品多义——雕塑、摄影、影像和装置艺术。展出材料的多义——毛线、木头、不锈钢、清水、黄土、玻璃纤维等。最重要的是，作品内容的多义——艺术家个人的回忆、眼睛对事物的误读、认知观点的正反、功能与实用的思考，等等。有趣的是，当你谈到你的观感时，杨子强却把一切都推翻了。因为你看到的

的不等于他看到的，你认为的也不等于他认为的。

## 为“误读”所“靠害”

为了更好地理解语言学家或者哲学家们的抽象观念，杨子强以一件装置艺术作品来说明，这件装置作品要表达的，正好是，当东方和西方站在一起时的面貌？

杨子强很巧妙地，把创意放在几张仿古花梨木明清古典桌椅上，这些纯黑的桌椅以阿拉伯数字“808”为构成图案，整体却是工匠们的精湛绝活。

他说，当东方和西方站在一起，本来充满矛盾和冲突，在几张仿古花梨木明清古典桌椅出现时，一切就被化解了。顾名思义，明清古典桌椅是非常东方的文化因素，当两者被安排在同一时空下出现，圆形的中国桌椅摇身变成西方才有的长形桌子，哪里还有什么矛盾和冲突？

另外，本来桌面晶莹剔透亮闪闪的名贵贝壳，却被杨子强去除。他把桌面和椅面，挖成盛水的凹洞，这是他通过语言和文字清楚表达出来的“所指”。“能指”呢？其实，那些桌椅，并非是大家常见的桌椅，因此当一个观者或来访者把自己手上的包包、书籍、信件等放在“桌面”上，这才发现，糟了！他所理解的桌椅功能已被转换，它已不再是平常的桌椅，它是艺术家刚刚创造出来的一件艺术作品。可是，当你理解到这点时，你手中的任何东西，已经被自己的“误读”所“靠害”。

## 人物全是“黑头黑脸”

杨子强展出的作品，共有几部分：桌椅、头盔和照片。后者照片上人物戴着的头盔，也是展出的系列9个不同著名人物的头顶之物。其中有：美国猫王的头盔、佛陀的头盔、漫画人物王小龙的头盔、日本浪人的头盔，等等。

这些重量级头盔，采用陶瓷为创作材料。它们是可看不可用的艺术性重量级头盔。头盔的可用价值是：当杨子强用数码相机把9个人物一个个画出来，甚至戴佛陀卷曲发饰头盔的那个人物形象，还会在墙壁上不停地转动和眨眼。

杨子强说：“很多时候，因为我们不精神和不注意，才无法看到周围事物的变化，一旦有改变，那是因为，事物的细微变化，已被你我定格下来。”

也有注意到，为何作品全部是黑色，而且人物全是“黑头黑脸”？

回答是：“展出的题目，就是《黑宴》，意思是‘黑色的宴会’。我们有时在没有路灯的晚上走路，两个不同的影子一定是重叠在一起；那种黑色，对我来说，充满了诗意。分离、对抗、重叠，一直是我创作的基本方向。我也企图模糊画中人物的性别，采用黑墨和黑发，把脸部尽量遮住，只留下可以让人猜想的脸型轮廓。”



杨子强展出的作品中，采用陶瓷为创作材料的人物头盔之一。

●杨子强个展日期：已开始，展至4月10日

时间：上午11时30分至晚上7时（星期三至星期五，周末12时至下午6时）。

地点：Richard Koh Fine Art画廊（71 Duxton Road）