

## Monthly Gallery Magazine – 12 / 2009 – Japan

### Close-up

#### ***'BORN FROM NOTHING AND DEVELOPPING INTO EMPTYNESS, PORTRAITS FLOATING IN LIGHT.'***

Belgian artist, Jean Claude Wouters is based in Europe.

He started his career as a dancer, and explored his talent in the fields of ballet, film and photography. He has lived in Japan in the past and had solo exhibitions showing his art works. Even though the digital photography is at the height of prosperity, Jean Claude Wouters chooses to use traditional black and white negatives and gelatin silver print.

For his latest exhibition in Tokyo, he shows the artworks of 'Buddhas', which he has been working on for the last couple of years. It started when he had the chance to visit the ancient cities of Kyoto and Nara and took photographs of antics Buddhas in temples and museums.

'I was a bit reluctant in the beginning,' Wouters says. 'Orignnaly, I am focusing on expressing the 'lights of living human beings', especially in the Portraits, not unanimated objetcs. For me, those sculptures of Buddhas were simply pieces of wood.'

'However, this experience gave me a chance to become aware of my mistake. What I was working on, was 'engraved woods with spirits' result of a thousand years of worshipping by thousands of people.'

The characteristic of Jean Claude Wouters work is his uses of 'White', which you can also see in this Buddhas serie. It is not the 'whiteness' which means 'empty' but rather means a strong 'existence'.

'For me, white is the trace of light beyond the colour. It is to express 'light', that I use traditional photographic technique. I should probably find a way to deal with 'light' more directly, not using photography.'

The portraits, which are created by the 'Whiteness' of Jean Claude Wouters, are too mysterious to be called 'images'.

They are almost floating between 'nothingness' and 'existence' in a timeless space.

Jean Claude Wouters says ' my work is born from nothing and develop to nothing. But its nothing is so rich . With his understanding of 'nothing' and 'sky' from the Zen teaching, it can be said that his works contain the values of eastern philosophy rather than from the west.

However, Wouters insist that he is not a Buddhist. He feels close to the simplicity of Shintoism. Born in Belgium but having lived in several different countries, he now live in the country of Islam in the Gulf.

It seems as if the utmost quiet world that Jean Claude Wouters creates, is the reflection of the artist who is like moving water. Jean Claude Wouters explains about his new work: ' To tell you the truth, the real title of my work on the Buddhas is ' Burned Buddhas Floating in the Water'. I have received this sentence from a Zen sermon. But it is better not to tell you hthe meaning of this, those representations should tell you the story, if you look at them carefully. '