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ARTIFACT

# the man who comes from other mountains

THE WORLD AS TOLD IN PENCIL ART.

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**B**old, they are a confrontation of the history of Chinese society. Stunning, they are a juxtaposition of Western popular culture and age-old conventions. Vivid, they are a narration of an intersecting world across time and space. Patiently and intricately drawn, these are just some of the masterpieces belonging to "The Man Who Comes from Other Mountains".

A Chinese artist living and working in Geneva, Switzerland today, this man is Qiu Jie – which in an ironic play of words, can be literally translated as "the man who comes from other mountains". Yet more than a pseudonym, it serves to define the artist and his works. It encapsulates his continual negotiation between memories, nostalgia, imagination and reality. It evokes the freedom of his nature, the difficulties of his childhood and the intersecting paths of his destiny in China and Switzerland.

Born in Shanghai in 1961, Qiu Jie's artistic journey began in Mao's Cultural Revolution. An impressionable child, he was deeply inspired by the *dazibao* aesthetics of the propaganda images in local newspapers. As he spent hours drawing and copying them, the 10-year-old Qiu Jie started to learn how to draw. It was not long before the quiet hobby became a passion, an artistic pursuit that would bring him to the Art Department of the Shanghai Light Industry College in 1978. There, he was taught in the light of realism, the official artistic movement at that time.

Upon graduation in 1981, Qiu Jie worked as a designer and decorator for a state company. His six-year employment allowed him to travel productively across China, all the while feeding his imagination and growing his well of inspiration. By 1985, he presented his first solo art exhibit at the Palace of Culture

Xu Hui in Shanghai and with the help of two Swiss artists, made his way to Geneva, where he attended and graduated with a degree in multimedia from the School of Fine Arts.

Without any kind of illusionary artifice, complicated processes, obscene material and violent confrontations, Qiu Jie's works occupy an unusual place in the contemporary art world. In black and white with all its subdued tonalities of grey, pencil allows him to engrave details on paper and relate a narration in microscopic view. Yet, far from dull, his strict adherence to the simplicity of his materials creates striking aesthetics, where detailing is key and juxtapositions make up the narrative's mainstay.

Indeed, each drawing is inspired by existing images extracted from an infinite panel of sources such as from newspapers, advertisings, paintings and photos – past or current, personal or public, narrative or descriptive, social or political. However, Qiu Jie drifts away from this first given material triggering imagination and creation. Like a novelist, he uses these existing characters and/or elements of context to compose a story of his own. Imbricating various components, he sets up relationships between them, making up a plot and rigorously tying a narration together. Two reading levels stem from this specific composition method: the new artist's story that one can observe on the final drawing is intertwined with each individual suggestive story that was the initial source of inspiration. Each element is thus independent and part of a larger unity.

The latest collection of "The Man Who Comes from Other Mountains" will be on solo exhibit at Art Plural Gallery from 13th September to 26th October.



TOP The New Long March - Pencil on paper  
BOTTOM Shanghai Bund - Pencil on paper

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Art Plural Gallery, [www.artpluralgallery.com](http://www.artpluralgallery.com)