

Hennessy

Together, we are unstoppable

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HENNESSY x YANG YONGLIANG

Q&A

PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

- Maison Hennessy welcomes in the 2024 Chinese New Year – the Year of the Dragon - with a limited-edition collection inspired by the digital art piece created by Chinese artist Yang Yongliang, called “Dragon’s Odyssey”.
- In honor of the dragon, the most symbolic and vital animal of the Chinese zodiac, Yang Yongliang has combined traditional drawings with striking digital art which literally breathe life, movement, energy and fire into a collective of metallic dragons dancing in and out of waves.
- The art-worked bottles are available in VSOP, XO and Paradis – a striking and rare collectable decanter in a beautiful oak giftbox.

YANG YONGLIANG Q&A

ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

What are you doing with Hennessy?

To celebrate 2024 Chinese New Year – the year of the dragon I've designed a digital art piece used for the collection of limited-edition bottles. The designs are in honor of the dragon, which is the most symbolic and vital animal in the Chinese zodiac. With my artwork, I want more people to believe the dragon is alive, I want to change the perception of dragons being just decorative and symbolic.

Why did you want to collaborate with Hennessy?

Hennessy’s respect about its own history and traditions was the thing that echoed with me the most – growing up in China, outside of Shanghai, I’ve always valued history and tradition. I was lucky enough to visit Cognac and learn about the well preserved, long history of the brand and its long association with China. The archives even have customs documents to China of the Qing Dynasty! And I resonated with that treasure of tradition.

Why did you choose dragons?

Well, of course it's the Year of the Dragon. I've always had a thing about dragons. Like all Chinese children, I grew up hearing classical dragon legends. That we are all descendants of the dragon. The dragon is the only non-extant Zodiac sign among the 11 other animals, and as a kid, I always found that strange. I like to believe that they must have existed at some point, even if science does not bear this out. I hope the artwork in the Hennessy limited editions shows that.

What was your inspiration?

When I was a young child, my grandmother gave me an antique coin. She was a farmer, and I think she probably found it in the ground. The coin was dirty, mottled, had no texture, and I had to brush and clean it to see the surface; and I found a dragon motif! It turns out that it was a coin from the Qing dynasty with a dragon on the surface of the coin. I wanted to share that memory through this collaboration with Hennessy. And this is what you see in all the work I've done with the Hennessy limited edition design work. In the physical painting, in the animation, and the packaging design - the dragon has a metallic surface, like a childhood memory of seeing a dragon on a coin. It brings back fond memories.

There's also a Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279) painting with five dragons. They're handscroll, long form, so I took inspiration from there in terms of the posture and positioning.

What did you most enjoy about this collaboration?

I love that Hennessy respects and honors history and tradition. And I enjoyed playing around with different artistic styles to get to the final design. I eliminated the oldish and terrifying feeling of a dragon. I emphasised movement, making it more natural and realistic, adding an animalistic quality to the dragon to make it universal, understood, and interesting to people who don't consider it like an existing animal. I want to make the next generation of adults proud of the dragon.

How do you go about drawing?

I don't hand-draw drafts. It's all computer-based from the start, and that's a habit that didn't start with these dragons but from when I've created digital landscapes. For my more traditional work, I document photography, and then make collages. The process is all computer-based.

On the Hennessy project specifically, when I worked on the dragons, I used a 3D program to do 3D sculptures — it's like sculpting in three-dimensional spaces.

Each bottle features a color which embodies the aspirations of the new year; red for joy and luck, gold for prosperity and porcelain for purity and preciousness.

ABOUT YANG YONGLIANG**Where did you grow up?**

I grew up in Jiading district, Greater Shanghai, an old town, which is about a 30-minute drive from the city center. Today, it is considered part of Shanghai but when I was growing up, it was considered a small town in its own right. It's very cinematic looking as it is a water town. So, growing up there, it made sense for me to study specific traditional art like calligraphy and landscape painting.

What are your inspirations?

While I was growing up, China was also changing fast. I started studying traditional painting at the age of 10. Then, in university, I started to study photography and three-dimensional arts — a more digital platform (probably influenced by my father who was a computer science engineer). So today what I do is combine both – the traditional art influence, but in a modern digital medium which has a more contemporary look.

How will you spend Chinese New Year?

I'll probably be with family, and we'll eat together. My pleasure comes from seeing my family happy. And when we were growing up, we didn't have much money, so Chinese New Year was when we really had a variety of different, delicious foods. There was always that excitement and anticipation. And of course, we used to have fireworks.

Usually at home, if my mom isn't around, I take over as the chef. I inherited my grandma's best recipes and I try to live up to her legendary cooking

Chinese New Year is also the moment I make resolutions and plan for the brand-new year ahead.