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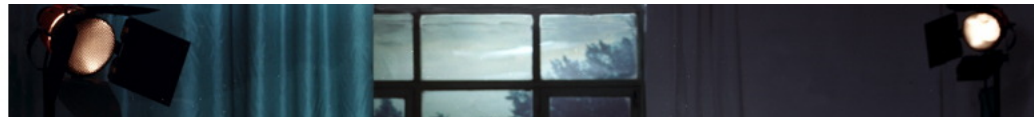
CAI DONGDONG



Cai Dongdong

China Contemporary Art + Born in 1978

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Cai Dongdong

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Cai Dongdong is a Chinese artist, born in 1978 in Tianshui, China. His artistic practice explores visual resources between the East and the West in forms of theatrical play and performances and his final thought process is often presented in the medium of photography. He invites the viewer into a fragmented realm, one not yet done but not quite undone. His use of carefully selected, yet arbitrarily placed items challenge notions of false realities.

Surrounded by a cluttered room of personal relics and snapshots of Cai Dongdong's past, a mother quietly breastfeeds her child, first welcoming you into the performance installation, *Breast Feeding (2012)*. Yet *Breast Feeding's* juxtaposition with the other staged photographs questions the voyeur's ultimate understanding of reality. In the tradition of war photography, Cai's *The 8th of Lunar December (2008)* depicts members of the *Chinese Nationalist Party* executing revolutionaries. Inspired by Goya's *The Shootings of May Third 1803*, Cai re-appropriates the work to re-explore and re-evaluate perceptions of death. Yet Cai Dongdong's hand selection of this stage's various components leads to a satirical play on the notion of "shoot" by replacing an armed soldier with a camera-equipped photographer. To be shot signifies death but also an internment in history. Consequentially, Cai radically alters not only the event's historical significance, but also its existence in photographic reality. The psyche's attempt to avoid reality is inevitable, yet whether out of fear or disinterest, the documented reality will continue. In *The Evasion of Light (2010)*, Cai Dongdong nods at the widespread yet underground "escort" services in China. Captured on camera by a policeman who is himself photographed standing just outside the set, 17 seated women turn and shield their faces. Yet one lone girl curiously stares upwards at her potential prosecutor, sitting on the ground perhaps just outside of the periphery of the policeman's lens. Only the crime scene negative can conclude whether she was there or not. Whether she was actually documented in the damning evidence remains a mystery to not only those viewing the work, but also likely to the artist himself. Her existence is again captured by a removed observer, regardless of being documented by the viewer within. Incorporating the complexities of reality, Cai Dongdong's elaborate sets create altering dimensions in which the significance and occurrence of events is altered. Further, the inclusion of a documenter within these sets pushes the psyche to question the truth of these dimensions, real and otherwise. For in both photographs and daily life, the intentional can only be deemed as such by he who has intended it to be.

Cai Dongdong held numerous exhibitions and is a recipient of the first prize of the 2010 The Third Terna Contemporary Art Award, in Italy. He currently lives and works in Beijing, China.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: DYLAN CUDDY



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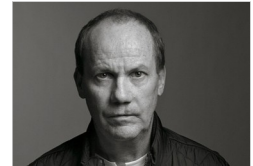
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