

REPLACE
替换为美术



REPLACE
WITH FINE ART
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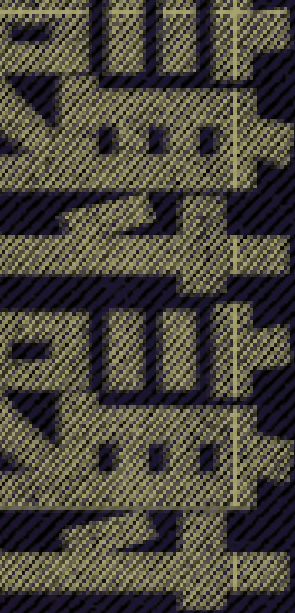
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REPLACE WITH FINE ART 替换为美术

Replace with Fine Art

Emily Hanako Momohara, curator

Associate Professor of Studio Art, Art Academy of Cincinnati

Western writers and critics are quick to dismiss China's role in the Industrial Revolution and history of Modernism. However, the people of China have built their own story for the nation's journey towards modernity. China's isolationist and censored past lacks an unmediated archive of imagery. Thus, the Chinese artists in this exhibition write a new, unguarded archive of China and its relationship to cultural identity and modernization. Replace with Fine Art reflects these artists' fundamental need to simultaneously preserve and push against their national past while constructing new narratives through ongoing artistic production in contemporary Chinese culture.

The last 120 years have seen politics and modernity molding the form and practice of Chinese art. Cai Yuanpei, a turn-of-the-century Chinese philosopher and revolutionary, suggested that one should, "replace religion with fine art." He held that aesthetics and artistic practice were equal in importance to religion and morality. In 1966, the Cultural Revolution would challenge the arts' value with Mao Zedong's Little Red Book stating, "There is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake." According to Mao's philosophy, any art not commissioned by the state was deemed dangerous propaganda. Roland Barthes, the French writer and philosopher, witnessed this censorship by China's government during his invitational 1974 trip.

His writings share the deep regret he perceived in his tour guides during their meditation of the “real” China from Western eyes. More recently, the 1990’s saw the loosening of certain restrictions in creativity (while others remained steadfast), influencing a wave of postmodern artists exposing the complexities of an emerging globalized China.

Today, Chinese artists create works describing the current trajectory of their nation. They are inspired by creatives like Yu Dafu, an early 20th-century Chinese writer and poet who critically analyzed the relationship between love of country and individual freedom. His writings explore the intersections between tradition, devotion, innovation and critique. Just as artists from the last century explored concerns of their time, today’s Chinese artists explore issues such as technological innovation, rapid growth and economic divides. Through these artists’ eyes, we see new insight into a historically veiled society.

Industrialization and Consumption

Replace with Fine Art’s historical narrative begins with industrialization during China’s Cultural Revolution, a Mao-led mid-century national effort to rid society of capitalism and religious values in favor of communism. Artist Jen Liu’s video piece *The Pink Detachment* acts as a companion piece to the 1960’s propaganda film *The Red Detachment of Women*. Her layered film directly challenges tradition and modernization’s toll on the individual. Production and consumer culture are examined through the use of sparse, peculiar settings. The viewer is unsure if the film exalts or critiques the factory’s value, raising deeper questions on the moral weight of labor and production.

Similarly, Liu Bolin comments on China’s consumerism culture with his work *Hiding in the City: Puffed Food* and *Hiding in the City: Panda* by literally embedding his body into repetitive rows of mass produced products. The imagery of commoditized excess reflects the weight and consequence of China’s newfound economic dominance. Liu Bolin’s absorption of his own body into the products conceals and reveals his placement in dominant culture.

In *A Hundred Surnames in Tofu* by artist Chen Qiulin uses the food’s decay as a metaphor to reflect the changes time has made on traditional Chinese culture. Additionally, her work exposes the prevalent waste of food which has become a symbol wealth and upward mobility.

Isolation

With technological advances and city planning, individuals become more isolated than ever. Chen Wei photographed the physical emptiness resulting from China's rapid growth. His Empty City images are eerie and lonely large-scale prints which engulf the viewer. Vacant "ghost cities" are common occurrences in China due to overzealous real estate investments and changes in governmental city planning. His dark, languid images create a sense of overpowering desire and loss. .

In his series Athens Love, photographer Ren Hang photographed his friends in shocking and awkward poses which relate to his personal and social relationships. His figures are in nude configurations awkwardly positioned in the landscape. Hang's intimate view into the personal mind is in direct conflict with Chinese Modernity surrounds him.

Love of Country

Modernization has proven to be a double-edged sword on many levels. The positive aspects of China's rise in power is a source of pride. However, the social and cultural casualties are vast and inspiring for many artists. Liu Bolin directly confronts the implications of modernization's influence on the Chinese landscape with The Great Wall. Within the image, Liu merges his body with the grandness of this structure of national pride while emphasizing the invisibility of the individual and societal consciousness under Communism.

Like Liu Bolin, Chen Qiulin uses the body and performance as a catalyst to connect the individual to a greater homogeneous society. Colour Lines addresses the constant demolition of older buildings and the traditions they symbolize. Materials of construction are transformed and emerge as love loss in physical form.

All the artists of Replace with Fine Art ask us to think about China from a unique and authentic vantage point - one that is neither stereotypical nor Western-leaning. They use photography and video to describe and narrate contemporary Chinese society through industrialization, consumerism, technology, culture, place and body. Like their own national culture, each artist carries with them a complicated historic relationship to Modernity, art and country.

Specifically Chinese

聚焦中华文化

Specifically Chinese **Chinese Contemporary Art in Modern Life**

Leo Li Chen

There is a long-term struggle rooted in Chinese contemporary art between the western centralist perspective and the identity of “Chinese”. After the “1989 China Avant-Garde” exhibition at the National Art Museum of China and the failure of the student movement in 1989, many Chinese artists were brought to the international museums, biennales and other mega exhibitions. Most of them won market success, yet perpetuated the stereotype of mainstream historical narrative of Chinese contemporary art, which was mainly constructed around the concepts of “Political Pop” and “Cynical Realism”. This shadow of the western world which sees China under an absolute appearance of political and sovereign still exists in the discussion of Chinese contemporary art after 30 years. On the other hand, it is invalid if we just simply use the framework of western academic views to observe the individual practices of different generations of Chinese artists without the local context and experience. It’s not only a historical issue but also a social, economic and political issue in globalization beyond the western centralism.

Jen Liu’s work is an excellent example which could bring the discussion of modern Chinese art to a new perspective after 1970s. Since the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 and the Chinese economic reform and opening-up policies from 1978, the pursuit for politics shifted to the development of economics while the braking social structure, to a great extent, the disjunction appears between the urban and rural areas.

In *The Pink Detachment*, Jen Liu reinterprets the *The Red Detachment of Women* (1970), a ubiquitous model opera ballet from the era of the Cultural Revolution in China. This opera ballet was created and distributed following the principle of “art should serve politics”, which was first published as talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art in 1942. It’s a typical case of Chinese art merged with communist ideology, which attracted the western leftist scholars, intellectuals and politicians to China in 1970s and instilled nostalgia, imagination communism and orientalism now. By adapting the original story of a peasant girl joining the revolution to the workstation of a female meat-processing worker in a hot dog factory, Jen Liu transforms the imagination and appearance of communism politics to the urgency of neoliberalism politics and contemporary perspectives, which dominates the power system of the flows of capital in globalization and appears as an authoritarian order.

The everyday life of migrants and the cultural heritage of their vanishing hometown reflect individual hopelessness and frustration when confronted with the almighty will of the state. Chen Qiulin’s practice is related to the resettlement of the artist’s hometown as part of the Three Gorges Project. Started in 1994, this China’s largest hydro power project has led to the resettlement of millions of people and loss of a whole ecosystem. In *Colour Line* (2008), the artist walks in the ruins like an angel that records both individual and collective histories. The movement of immigrants and urban development collide with the elements of Chinese traditional culture in *1000 Surnames in Tofu* (2004-2014). Chen Qiulin’s practice nostalgically retraces memories of an individual life autonomous from materialism.

In modern Chinese life, the collective ideology shifts to a collective anxiety based in a consumer society. Chen Wei’s photographic works focus on the metropolitanism and experiences of young generation. In Chen’s dance/club series, he reconstructed and staged the night life scene in the interior of his studio. The dramatic and cinematic emotion originates from his distrust and doubt of the psychological state of “escape” and space of “empty”. The virtual and real space creates a gap of “escape”, reflecting the anxieties of urban residents under the rapid current of modernization and urbanization, imported music and pop dance culture cease to be the site of sustenance and consolation for the individual to assert its existence and values.

The tension between ideological control and the expression of individual will, both of them still exist in a more complex way of political consensus hidden in the daily life of the Chinese masses in a globalization context. Ren Hang’s photography works represent the nude bodies in a natural environment, which is beautiful and fearless with loneliness and sorrow. They reflect the desires of humanity and politics of the erotic.

The common wildness and sadness belongs to everyone, rather than a subculture or edge of mainstream society. The intimacy is formed between individuals or individuals and subjectivities, undone and broken by the power of civilization while the development of modernization in the China's whole.

Leo Li Chen is an independent curator and researcher based in Hong Kong, with a research focus on Chinese contemporary art. Chen is a research fellow in City University of Hong Kong. His main research interest focuses on spatial and aesthetic politics, moving image and artistic intervention. He was the curator of *Adrift* (OCAT, Shenzhen, 2016), *That Has Been, and Maybe Again* (Para Site, HK, 2016) and *After Party: Collective Dance and Individual Gymnastics* (Blindspot Gallery, HK, 2017), and so on. He is a long-term contributing writer for *Artforum*, *Leap*, *The Art Newspaper China* and *Art World*.

Chen Qiulin Colour Lines

Video
Length 8:08
Date 2008

Image Courtesy of the Artist and 1000 Plateaus Art Center





Chen Wei
Future and Modern

Archival Pigment Print
Date 2014
100x125 cm

Image Courtesy of the Artist and ShangArt

Chen Wei

Today is Unsuitable for Shooting

Archival Pigment Print

Date 2013

100x125 cm

Image Courtesy of the Artist and ShangArt





Jen Liu
The Pink Detachment

Video
Length 19:40
Date 2015

Image Courtesy of the Artist

Chen Qiulin

1000 Surnames in Tofu

Video

Length 2:15

Date 2004-2014

Image Courtesy of the Artist and 1000 Plateaus Art Center





Liu Bolin
Hiding in the City
Puffed Food

C-print
Date 2011
118x150 cm

Image Courtesy of Eli Klein Gallery

Liu Bolin
Hiding in the City
Panda

C-print
Date 2011
120x160 cm

Image Courtesy of Eli Klein Gallery





Liu Bolin
Hiding in the City
Great Wall

C-print
Date 2010
100 x 150 cm

Image Courtesy of Eli Klein Gallery

Ren Hang
Untitled

C-print

Date 2015

39 3/8 x 26 3/8 inches (100 x 67 cm)

Image Courtesy of Eli Klein Gallery





Ren Hang
Untitled

C-print

Date 2015

39 3/8 x 26 3/8 inches (100 x 67 cm)

Image Courtesy of Eli Klein Gallery

Ren Hang
Untitled

C-print

Date 2015

26 3/8 x 39 3/8 inches (67 x 100 cm)

Image Courtesy of Eli Klein Gallery





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