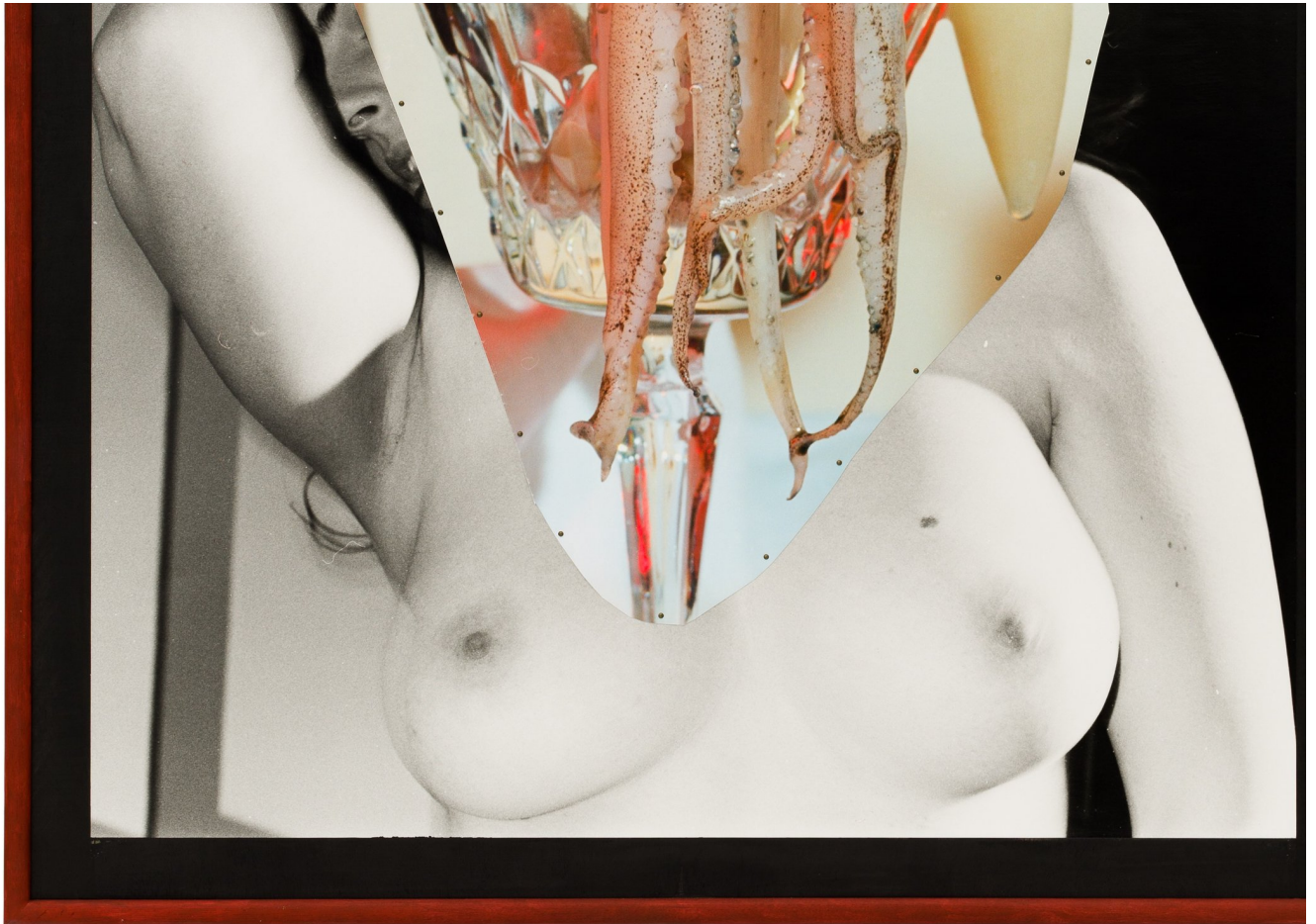


MAR 17 EXHIBITION REVIEW: A RECENT SURVEY IN CHINESE CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY

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BIRDHEAD, *Passions Bloom Ambitions - 43*, 2017, Colour chromogenic print, gelatin silver print printed on Hahnemuhle fine art baryta 325g, collage, alloy nails, wet mounted on elmwood, 60 1/8 x 40 1/2 x 2 3/8 inches (153 x 103 x 6 cm), Courtesy of the artist, Eli Klein Gallery and ShanghART © BIRDHEAD

Written by Katie Grierson

Copy Edited by Sophia Yates

The Eli Klein Gallery is exploring and challenging the medium of photography through its newest group exhibition titled *Renew—A Recent Survey in Chinese Contemporary Photography* (<http://www.galleryek.com/exhibitions/renew-a-recent-survey-in-chinese-contemporary-photography>). Including ten Chinese contemporary artists, the exhibition isn't bound by generation or topic. The inventive works featured in the exhibition not only document the times they were taken, but they are alive, brimming with emotion and striking imagery, both provocative and sentimental. The 18 photos showcased encapsulate war, social movements, the pandemic, and the deeply personal. They are taken by photographers of varying ages and experiences. Featured artists include Birdhead, Cai Dongdong, Chen Xiaoyi, Liu Bolin, Wen Feiyi, Xie Sichong, Xu Guanyu, Yang Bawei, Ye Funa, and Zeng Han.



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Cai Dongdong On Fire, 2020 Gelatin silver print, mirror in artist's frame 14 1/2 x 14 1/2 x ... Cai Dongdong Theater, 2021 Gelatin silver print, cloth in artist's frame

A central aspect of the exhibition is its experimental nature and the willingness of the photographers to test the boundaries of photography. Cai Dongdong's *On Fire* has a scorch mark in its center, two solemn sculptures perfectly framed around it, the black-and-white photo's only color being the burn marks. Dongdong's other work in the collection, *Theater*, veils a disturbing scene with a physical curtain that viewers can move on their own. Hidden in an entirely different manner, Liu Bolin becomes the world around him, blending into bright supermarket backgrounds. "Disappearing is not the main point of my work," Liu said "It's just the method I use to pass on a message. It's my way to convey all the anxiety I feel for human beings." Birdhead, made up of Song Tao and Ji Weiyu, creates their own world through collage, while Chen Xiaoyi blends photography and printmaking to craft abstract artwork, like *Foam, Form (Phase 1)*, which came to being as Chen captured wind-blowing soap bubbles.





Xu Guanyu, *The Dining Room* (from the series *Temporarily Censored Home*), 2018, Archival pigment print, 56 x 70 inches (142 x 178 cm), Edition of 3, Courtesy of the artist, Eli Kl Richardson © Xu Guanyu

These photographers view the art as fluid.. Breakable and moldable, their approaches are stunning and result in work that doesn't mind living outside the confines of the artform. Xu Guanyu's *The Dining Room* exemplifies this. The past and present sit alongside each other as Xu returns to his parent's home and makes it a living collage. Raised in a conservative household, Xu never came out to his parents, and the temporary displays he built in their home would have to be hastily taken down before they returned. In a way, Xu reclaims his childhood home as a queer place. Speaking to Gup Magazine about the work, Xu said, "I'm constantly reflecting on my past experiences in these rooms, especially my relationship with objects, symbols, and aesthetics within the space...these juxtapositions, contradictions, and disruptions are conjuring my past as well as open up space for a potential future." *Temporarily Censored Home* rejects reality, and allows us to enter into a world of Xu's own creation, where space and time have no rule, and his experiences as a queer man in China and America are as vivid as the walls of the home.



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iu Bolin Hiding in North Korea - Supermarket Pyongyang, 2018 Archival pigment print 44.5x33.5cm_2018

Ye Funa Subspecies - 30 Hatsune Miku, 2019 Archival pigment print 31x24cm_2019

Renew - A Recent Survey in Chinese Contemporary Photography tests the bounds of photography and rejoices in disregarding the norms of the form. It begs us to question what we can learn from stepping out of what is comfortable.

The group exhibition will be on view at the Eli Klein Gallery (<http://www.galleryek.com/exhibitions/renew-a-recent-survey-in-chinese-contemporary-photography>) from February 23 – April 23, 2022.


Photo Editor: Chris Zarcadoolas

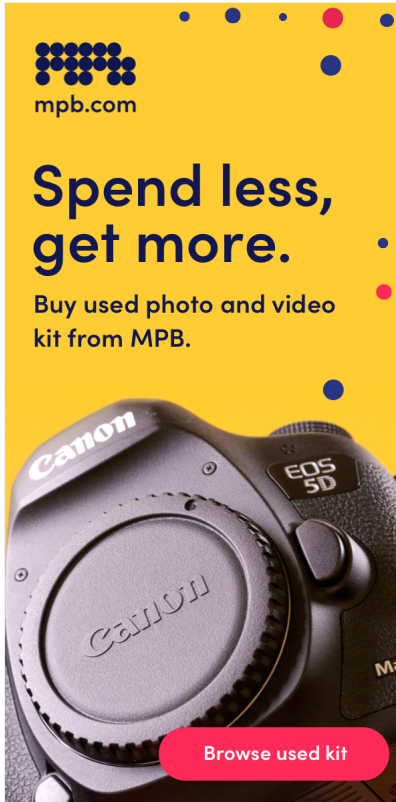
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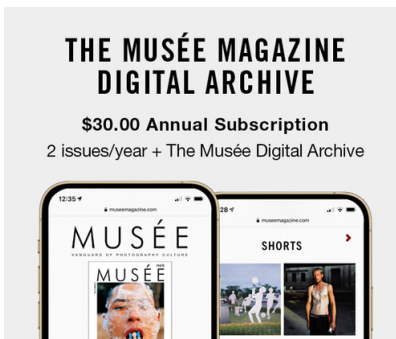
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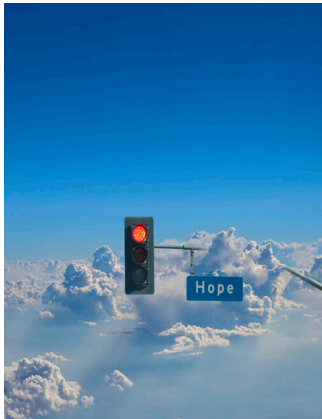
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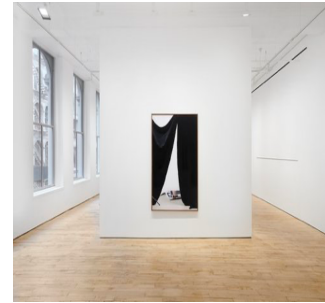
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