

RENEW



Birdhead

Liu Bolin

Cai Dongdong

Wen Feiyi

Chen Xiaoyi

Xie Sichong

Xu Guanyu

Yang Bowei

Ye Funa

Zeng Han

A Recent Survey in Chinese Contemporary Photography

ELI KLEIN GALLERY
398 West Street, New York, NY 10014

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ELI 奕来
KLEIN 画廊

Most of art history is based on the trilateral relationship of "Artist" - "Medium" - "Art", with a self-rejuvenating mechanism often centered around pivotal social events, whether it's war, civil movements, or in the most recent case - a pandemic. Under the macro landscape of photography, given the specificity of the medium, it is particularly intriguing to observe how the trilateral relationship of "Photographer" - "Way of seeing" - "Photographs" renews. In the history of photography, we had already witnessed the expansion of definition and re-definition on all three divisions mentioned above. This exhibition aims to further explore recent advancements of photography in a broader sense throughout recent tumultuous years.

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鸟 头

Birdhead

“

The large volume of photographs that we have made since 2004 all originate from various aspects of our lives, so for us an individual photograph can never be more than only a small fragment that has been cut out from that. Maintaining this kind of habitual practice, we think photography takes on significance in continually doing the same thing. To put it exactly, through the medium of photography and the recurring connections with our physical environments that it enables, we attain a kind of spiritual discipline.

”



Passions Bloom Ambitions - 43, 2017

Colour chromogenic print, gelatin silver print printed
on Hahnemuhle fine art baryta 325g,
collage, alloy nails, wet mounted on basswood,
framed with elmwood
60 1/8 x 40 1/2 x 2 3/8 inches (153 x 103 x 6 cm)

蔡
东
东

Cai Dongdong

“

On Fire is a photograph taken at the Cemetery of Confucius. His mausoleum itself is over 2000 years old, hosting more than two hundred thousand disciples and followers of Confucianism to this day, making the Cemetery of Confucius the longest standing family burial ground in China. Confucius' school of thought has brewed over China like a religion during the past 2000 years. Upon a glance, its disciplines seem to dictate the way Chinese people act and think; however, in reality, the philosophy is being taken apart and shattered by the Chinese's day-to-day actions and behaviors.

Theater touches on a certain kind of Societal Typology; it is inspired by the words of Jesus: "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God".

”



On Fire, 2020

Gelatin silver print, mirror in artist's frame
14 1/2 x 14 1/2 x 2 inches (37 x 37 x 5 cm)
Edition of 3



Theater, 2021

Gelatin silver print, cloth in artist's frame
19 5/8 x 39 3/8 x 2 inches (50 x 100 x 5 cm)
Edition of 3

陈
萧
伊

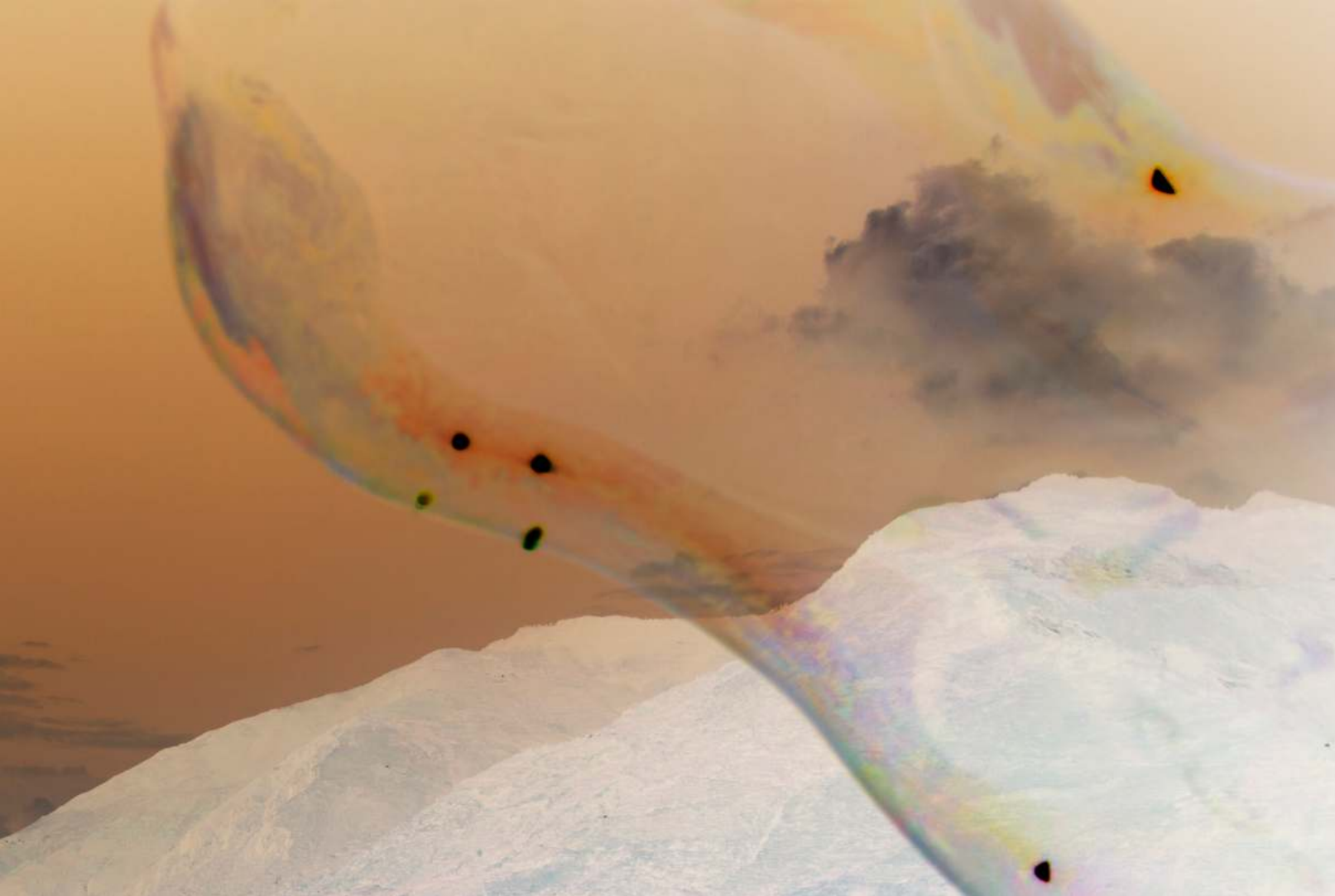
Chen Xiaoyi

“

I have always been concerned with the subtle perceptions of human beings, and previous work leads me to focus on how to present a "critical point" state more clearly, "representing" the natural creative action by itself. In April this year, I started the Phase 1 of the new project that doing performance with huge soap bubbles in some valleys, and tried to use the ephemeral material like foam to correspond to the mountains and rivers which seemingly eternal. Also, these valleys were once small towns, however it was moved away for various reasons.

Simultaneously, the formation of these bubbles is the direction in which the wind blows, or the shape of the wind, so it is a depiction of the wind as itself. Moreover, things appear on unusual way in this unconventional observation of the negatives photo, making us pay more attention to the outline and form to constitute itself into image.

”



Foam, Form (Phase 1), 2019
Giclee Print
A set of 2 (2/2)
23 5/8 x 35 3/8 inches (60 x 90 cm) Each



Foam, Form (Phase 1), 2019
Giclee Print
A set of 2 (1/2)
23 5/8 x 35 3/8 inches (60 x 90 cm) Each

刘
勃
麟

Liu Bolin

“

My protests with the disappearance of the body aim to call for more people to pay attention to the artist's struggles to survive, as well as to their works. Therefore, by disappearing and by making the body invisible, I wish to make them more visible. I hope the works can help raise awareness of key problems and issues happening in our world today - pollution, climate change, inequality and so forth. I see it as my way of artistic expression, a way to communicate with society and to share my life experience and my views on the world.

”



*Hiding in North Korea -
Supermarket Pyongyang, 2018*

Archival pigment print
44 1/4 x 59 inches (113 x 150 cm)
Edition of 5



*Hiding in Russia -
Russia Magazine, 2012*
Archival pigment print
44 1/4 x 59 inches (113 x 150 cm)
Edition of 6

文非易

Wen Feiyi

“

I am looking into the idea on how we understand concepts of emotions such as pathos through a cross-cultural context. Using the Greek notion of pathos, I investigate other corresponding non-western aesthetic concepts, such as Chinese lyrical tradition concept of qing jing jiao rong (fusion of scene and emotion), Japanese aesthetics of mono no aware (pathos of things), etc. This research has led me to further interest in the dilemma of translation. There are concepts which exist in one culture quite vividly, but which also do not contain a single trace in other cultures of their etymology.

The second chapter of the work: Wood, Water, Rock is a continuing exploration of interpretations of landscapes from different cultural perspectives with an emphasis on the discussion around metaphor, symbols and juxtaposition of specific elements found within nature.

”



The Untitled
from Under the Yuzu Tree, 2019

Inkjet print on bamboo paper
19 3/4 x 23 5/8 inches (50 x 60 cm)
Edition of 5



The Untitled
from Wood, Water, Rock, 2019

Inkjet print on bamboo paper
10 x 15 1/8 inches (26 x 39 cm)
Edition of 5

徐冠宇

Xu Guanyu

“

In *Temporarily Censored Home*, I covertly situated photographs in my teenage home in Beijing to queer the normativity of my parents' heterosexual space. Through positioning, layering, and recontextualizing images, I aim to juxtapose, contradict, and collapse space and time, disrupting my teenage home. It bridges the relationship between personal and political in the context of the oppressive systems of both China and the US. I reclaimed my home in Beijing as a queer space of freedom and temporary protest.

”



In his recent series, *Temporarily Censored Home* (2018-2019), Xu covertly created intricately layered photographic installations in his parents' home in Beijing, queering the normativity of this heterosexual space. By inserting a vast array of both made and collected photographs, including images from family albums, adverts and editorials he collected as a teen, and portraits of himself and other gay men, Xu reclaims his home as a queer space of freedom and rebellion. In some rooms, photographs of varying sizes cover every visible inch, while in others oversized prints are draped over pieces of furniture or hanging from the ceiling. Doorways and windows are replaced with photographs to create dizzying perspectives in which the viewer is led to wonder what is real and what is not. These juxtapositions collapse space and time, pointing to the relationship between individual freedom and global political governance while aiming to dissolve the borders of opposition.

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 and Yancy Richardson

谢思冲

Xie Sichong

“

My practice combines movement and material in body-based sculptural forms, including masks, costumes, and other objects. By placing traditional sculptural forms within new sites, materials, and social constructs, I investigate these forms and movements within global communities to re-consider and re-envision shared spaces and performative practices.

Personal becomes political. To reflect the patriarchal society in China, I imitate historical monuments, such as statues of Chairman Mao, while taking multiple photos of myself jumping in the air with a handmade fake Louis Vuitton Communist suit. I want to create something absurd to question reality: Which one is more real, the sculpture of the patriarchal figure or the person jumping? Is the surreal man-made landscape more real or the ghostly jumping figure? There is humor in my work, but I want people to realize the gravity and profundity of the issues behind the absurdity.

”



3/3

You can't take away from me. IV.

Sichung Kile.

You Can't Take That Away From Me IV, 2015

Photo lithograph, etching, hand inking

11 1/2 x 15 inches (29 x 38 cm)

Edition of 5



5/5

You can't take away from me I

Sichong Xie.

You Can't Take That Away From Me II, 2016

Photo lithograph, etching, hand inking

11 1/2 x 15 inches (29 x 38 cm)

Edition of 5

杨博炜

Yang Bowei

“

Traumas, as a psychic trace of mind, also had been digested to become the testimonies and fragments of identity in my work. Like Sontag used to say that a photograph was a piece of time, trauma somehow was a piece of personal or collective belongingness.

In my practice, utilizing an allegorical and metaphorical method to translate the reality is a way to resist photography becoming an index towards reality.

”



*Aggregation of dreams,
a conversation about
the collective identity in China, 2020*

C-print

18 7/8 x 23 5/8 inches (48 x 60 cm)

Edition of 3



Flower petals pinned on the window, 2020

C-print

12 1/8 x 9 7/8 inches (31 x 25 cm)

Edition of 3



The broken vase (China), 2020

C-print

17 3/4 x 14 1/8 inches (45 x 36 cm)

Edition of 3

叶甫纳

Ye Funa

“

The relationship between netizens is fascinating; all the memes and interest communities reflect their love for their idols; one piece of duckweed is fragile, but when they are connected into a mass, the outcome can be spectacular.

Today, "Master" often refers to the classic works of the old masters, which carry an elite aesthetic; while the transformed "Master" mingles the expression of subculture and mainstream art, and expects to be recognized by the public as the "new folk art".

”



The series <Subspecies: 30 Miku> is inspired by subspecies derivatives of the virtual idol Hatsune Miku, and invites 30 different cosplayers to play their own imaginary image of Miku. Hatsune Miku's derivative image, known as "subspecies", is in fact the "recreation" and "secondary recreation". The prototype of Miku is known as "formula", based on which thousands of possibilities can be derived, and the subspecies can also be enriched and varied under the interpretation of artists and cosplayers. As an unrecognized artistic derivative similar to fan literature, subspecies, however, shows astonishing creativity in imitation. The scene was taken on a construction site in Jinzhanxiang, Beijing, where the site is always under the protection of green nets. The color of the nets matches the green hair of Miku, which also reminds me of people comparing the gathering of fans or netizens to a floating mass of duckweed on a lake, for they are both connected through "weak links".

Subspecies - 30 Hatsune Miku, 2019

Archival pigment print

32 5/8 x 47 5/8 inches (83 x 121 cm)

Edition of 5



<Another Dream>: As a youth subculture, the "Smart" phenomenon has a unique group aspiration of belonging. The aesthetic contradictions between urban and rural, local and international, grassroots and "aristocrat", primitive and avant-garde are reflected chaotically on this group of teenagers, who look flamboyant, act restlessly, but are emotionally desperate. They present aesthetical segregation, which is a distinct, ephemeral community cultural landscape in the process of the urban development of contemporary China. In the course of investigating and collaborating with this group, the artist invented a new concept called "Ma-Shi-Te", a word derived from the English word "Master", which is similar to the way that "Smart" has been transformed by "Sha-Ma-Te".

Another Dream, 2021

Archival pigment print
19 5/8 x 26 inches (50 x 66 cm)
Edition of 5

曾
翰

Zeng Han

“

Shanshui is the observation and reflection of the relationship between the Chinese and the world they live in. For over a thousand years, Chinese painters have dedicated themselves to making Shanshui a powerful medium through which to present the objects of the external world and the thoughts of the inner spiritual world, achieving a balance. The core motivation for the continuity of Shanshui lies in the interaction and integration between human and nature, and how can this relationship be sustained today?

Nowadays, imaging has become the most important art medium. Can photography become a medium that transcends time and space, just like traditional landscape paintings? There is no so-called realistic reproduction relationship between photography and the objective world. Using photography as my brush and ink, how can a contemporary Shanshui be portrayed?

”

Echo of Shanshui 08, 2021

Archival pigment print
19 5/8 x 59 inches (50 x 157 cm)
Edition of 7





Echo of Shanshui 10, 2021
Archival pigment print
19 5/8 x 39 3/8 inches (50 x 105 cm)
Edition of 7

ELI 奕来
画廊
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