

Qin Qi

Artist: Qin Qi

Curator: Cui Cancan

Opening Date: May 27, 2017 (Saturday), 4 PM

Exhibition Dates: May 27 to July 23, 2017

Exhibition Venues: Tang Contemporary Art Beijing (both spaces)

Tang Contemporary Art is proud to announce the opening of the exhibition “Qin Qi.” The show will present the work of artist Qin Qi, curated by Cui Cancan, from May 27 to June 23, 2017. After more than a year of research and discussions with the artist, the curator extracted two threads from Qin Qi’s work spanning 2010 to 2017. Cui chose more than forty works centered on these themes, which will be exhibited across both Tang Contemporary Art Beijing spaces. The two parts complement and echo one another; one cannot exist without the other. This exhibition is Qin Qi’s largest and most important solo show to date.

Since Qin Qi emerged in the art world in 2002, he has created work that both negates and advances ideas and styles, forging a distinctive path for himself within a new generation of painting. He began with erotic images and allegorical narratives in early 2000, then in 2004, he shifted toward pictorial experiments in painting. Later, he moved away from the event-driven and unfinished qualities of these images and engaged with a consciousness of form and structure, and developed weight, brushstrokes, and vision in his images. In 2010, Qin Qi held a large solo exhibition at the Shanghai Minsheng Art Museum, entitled “Chairs Can Save Lives.” The show was well-received, and it became emblematic of a new mode of painting.

Since 2010, Qin Qi has embarked upon a new phase in his work. His artistic vision, values, and expectations have also undergone a fundamental transformation. Qin Qi is not anxious to establish any kind of stable style, or cement his own taste. To his mind, all of the resources and movements from the history of art can be used in the service of his work. He has always pursued change and learning, which means that all of his work is subservient to the demands of his research. An expansiveness of vision and a diversity of style have become typical traits of Qin’s work. Due his understanding of phases in long artistic careers, his research is just the beginning, because his research develops with his awareness of issues and his constant self-negation.

The works in the first space are arranged by theme and type, representing a layering of logic. *The Angry Octopus* is the introduction to the space. An octopus holds a brush in every tentacle, which could be seen as a metaphor for the fact that Qin employs all styles and themes in his paintings. Two

common painting subjects—still-lives and figures—alternate on the first wall of the main hall. The comparison between the two is interesting, with the thematic links between the still-lives and the paintbrushes inserted into the bonsai, the practical relationship between the chef and the food as still life, the formal progression of the chef, the goose, and the octopus, the use of the white ground in the entire group of paintings, and the connection between the arrangement of the still-lives, the wrinkles in the chef's clothing, and the Cubist visual structure. On the opposite wall, six paintings of interior scenes center on another thread in Qin Qi's work, echoing the figures of the goose and the chef from the previous part and juxtaposing the alternating still-lives and figures in the same image, which gives these subjects a completely new status. An intensely decorative style serves as the backdrop for this series, which points elsewhere due to the various interior scenes and perspectives, and the repeated appearance of bouquets of flowers. On the most important central wall, three similar works featuring traditional academic nudes serve as the axis of the first space, an overall foundation for Qin's study of painting themes, modeling, and pictorial structures. One work featuring an interior with two figures is framed by two single figures to the left and right; they are both separate and a unit, recombined with new figures to make different works. This process of deconstruction and reconstruction is repeated throughout the space. When works with similar elements are juxtaposed, a storyboard effect emerges. These new figural works bring together the two entirely different logics on the left and right walls, logics as different as a long shot and a montage in film. Even if the scene is constantly shifting and fluctuating, the figures, colors, and objects are connected as secrets. They are like a secret key that opens the artist's world. It is inserted into the paintings, whether covertly or overtly.

In the smaller room, four paintings from the series *Pillar* concentrate and then dissect the process surrounding the series. The works gradually evolve from drafts painted in oil to studies of parts of the composition, then to complete works. In two cases, Qin Qi revised and finished works that he had abandoned. Both the pillars leaning out of a lawn and the trees in a snowy mountain landscape attempt to present the changes that have taken place in his process of research and advancement. Qin shows what he has abandoned and what themes he has continued. In view of an artist's personal history, he asks whether an artist should end up with a style or result, whether research and experimentation are processes intended to uncover a style or concept, and whether the artist must always engage with these issues. In the first space, Qin Qi gives the viewer a sincere answer.

The first space ends with "The Flesh and Spirit of a Painter". A painting with two figures appears once again; a man and a woman are half-lying on wrinkled white sheets. The man is lost in thought, with a dignified expression. The left side of the painting is the hand of a painter, created in 2011. The woman is

fidgety, wearing an alarmed expression. The right side of the painting is a piece of cut meat, created in 2010.

The second space primarily features Qin's new series of mannered paintings, which is divided into three parts. The threads extracted from these works reflect his research into subject matter, styles, and themes. The space takes one of the artist's *en plein air* sketches in the symbolist style as a prelude, shifting from the first part's tropical sensibility to three paintings with Romantic qualities, in which Qin combines folk themes with Romantic portraiture. These works have the tones and aesthetic methods of regional culture, and he compares and combines personal romantic lives and different ideologies in these paintings. In the second part, intense exotic touches are emphasized and strengthened; repeated forms are presented in a row with different tonal themes. A night-time celebration in Prussian blue lays the foundation for this part, because it connects with the joyous, festive quality from the previous part, which also places the same people against different backgrounds. Ho Chi Minh, surrounded by Degas' dancers, watches everything in the painting, figures with legs crossed or standing. In day and night, desert and sea, wilderness and interior, what were originally irrational relationships are given a new order and fantastical quality.

If the second part stresses the connection and re-placement of manner, style, and figuration, then the third part more explicitly shows the creative methods of Qin Qi's work. During the same creative phase, he studied formal repetition and independent modeling. The first Ho Chi Minh series points to past art historical sources, in that an existing photograph was adapted into a painted scene. The left side is Ho Chi Minh in front of Cézanne's forest. On the right, amidst Gauguin's tropical jungle, the modeling and posture of the figure and the color of the clothing have changed with the scene. The second Ho Chi Minh series brings the change in the picture down to a minimum, such that there are only differences in color between nearly identical images. It somewhat foreshadows the next series of works, which shifts from the repetition of specific forms to the conscious repetition of creative methods, like an echo.

The Farewell of hats becomes the final key for this space, but the series also symbolizes the spiritual direction of this exhibition. How should we say goodbye? These four works were finished at different times, but contain nearly identical scenes. Only the slant of the boat, the way the crowd is grouped, or the sky and the perspective have changed noticeably. Thus, changeable clouds and boundless sea are the artist's reference to his own path and vision for the future—how he says goodbye to past experiences, how he constantly takes off hats, how he establishes and overturns self-definitions, and how he drives a long painting career.

Like one of Duchamp's puns, the exhibition presents two threads with many branches in these two spaces, seeking the invisible relationships and past traces within Qin Qi's recent work. The placement of every work in the exhibition space and the relationships between the paintings were determined by the artist and the curator after repeated deliberation and deep thought. Thus, the exhibition requires that the viewer come to see the exhibition in person; catalogs and other media cannot replicate this experience. We collectively complete the show through our layered viewing memories and experiences and our judgment of the present artistic context.

(Text/ Cui Cancan)