

Post-me Generation : How to write about young artists

2022.7.24 - 8.20

Tang Contemporary Art, Beijing Headquarters Gallery Space
(B5, Yard No.3, Jinhang E. Rd., Shunyi District, Beijing)

Curator: Fiona Lu

Artists:

Alessandro Gianni

Chen Yingjie

Diren Lee

Etsu Egami

Gongkan

Hao Zecheng

Hou Jianan

Huang Bingjie

Jade Ching-yuk Ng

Jia Yirui

Kitti Narod

Liao Man

Olivier Souffrant

Suntur

Wang Xiyao

Wendimagegn Belete

Yang Bodu

Zhang Zhanzhan

Tang Contemporary Art is proud to announce the opening of our NBICT Beijing Headquarters Gallery Space. Our first exhibition "Post-me Generation: How to write about young artists", curated by Fiona Lu, will open on July 24th, 4PM. The show will focus on a diverse group of 18 young artists worldwide.

Post-Me Generation: How to Write About Young Artists

If there was a "History of Young Artists", how would it be written? Since the 1980s, the British artist group, which had declined in the context of the Cold War and post-modernity, created the concept of "yBa" and made it thrive. It has profoundly influenced the progress of global art history and is still having enormous influence and commercial value. The Triennial of the New Museum in New York, which started in 2009 (the theme of the first triennial was "Younger Than Jesus") also has a certain transcendental spirit and historical ambition. Instead of becoming a fashion cycle or passing fad, the history of young artists is becoming a vortex of reality, that has swept through the arts ecosystem. This is not only the "past history", but also the "contemporary history" (Benedetto Croce) and "future history". Noticeably, a group of young artists in the "Post-Me Generation" are intervening in the current arts ecosystem with a strong attitude. Contrary to the "Me Generation" that emphasizes the ego, young artists in the "Post-Me Generation" are showing a more relaxed state, with vigilance and hesitation about the original "rebellion". In history, the rise of new artists was always based on the historical development experience of previous artists. With the development of painting, the rise of new art, and the revival of painting media, a new chapter will seek truth in these historical cycles. The young artists in the "Post-Me Generation" will write their own history in a different way. They have created the products of consumerism and digital technology revolution through intermediary coding, seeking more individualized expressions through the spiritual transmission between generations such as "Expressionism" and "Pictures Generation". Most of their paintings are neo-formalist, full of intertextuality with the current reality and infinite creativity.

In Benedetto Croce's historical narrative, he asserts that the distinction between "contemporary history" and "chronicle" is whether it has life. In Croce's opinion, history has "strategies": what makes a history book true history is the understanding and grasping of the past inspired by the needs of real life. History is no longer a collection of ideas, and "historical nodes" only become steps that can be adjusted as needed in practice. Allowing the materiality and carrier (people and events) of historical development to survive is far more important than establishing a systematic history. He believes that the vitality of history is one of the pressing issues in today's history. As a part of the "history in progress", "History of Young Artists" can be an ideal object of historical study. It is this complexity that facilitates this exhibition in research. Where are their vitality and necessity?

Existentialism has explained the historicity of "I" and "Self": "Dasein", or "being-in-the-world", is about time. "Self" only has meaning in history

and dynamics. How to understand "Post-Me"? "The End of History and the Last Man" was published in 1992. If viewed as a kind of "post-historical human beings", this group of creators in the "Post-Me Generation" have not experienced the "Self" in conventional "history" in their lives. They are exactly like the "historical cryonics" after time stopped. If contemporary history is the real history as Croce says, this group of artists should be the real "meta-young artists". The current situation is more like a certain iteration of the manifesto of the "Posthastism" movement put forward by Joseph Grima and others after 2008. Hans Ulrich Obrist, one of the members at the time, described art as an important resisting force against the "homogenization" of time. The essence of capitalism is to standardize and quantify time, whereas the job of artists and historians is to foster a flexible psyche that can freely make time faster, slower, or repeated. In this sense, the new academic art and accelerationism are not in conflict. The "Self" of the new generation of artists can freely adapt to historical interpretations, and embrace the future in the continuation to obtain freshness and keep their willingness for continuous renewal.

The term "Me Generation" actually refers to the "Post-80s Generation" in China and a part of the Gen Y in the West. The very distinctive feature of this generation is individualism. But the younger generation of artists has demonstrated their precocious professional sense in community culture. Most of them possess strong skills, theoretical knowledge, and art history knowledge, thanks to their solid academic foundation and diverse background. They are passionately drawn to neo-formalist paintings and some marginalized social thinking (such as gender, region, and race) that are closer to themselves. With more relaxed postures, they can easily juxtapose the arts familiar to the post-60s and 70s such as "Pop Art" and the "Pictures Generation" art, as well as the "Screen Generation" art developed by the post-80s generation. Under the premise of the current multi-interest orientation, media socialization, and the new digital technology revolution, art criticism and value selection are also quietly changing, and the inevitable evaluation of young artists is also becoming a part of history. Innovative understanding of controversial and diverse interpretations has become an case study of utmost urgency.

Fiona Lu
July 15, 2022