

Tang Contemporary Art and ICONSIAM presents:

Ecstasy: Li Bangyao Solo Exhibition

Artist: Li Bangyao

Curator: Ai Hai

Exhibition Dates: 4 February - 13 March 2021

Venue: Tang Contemporary Art Bangkok

Opening Reception: 4 February at 4:00PM

Tang Contemporary Art Bangkok is delighted to present key works by Li Bangyao, created from 2007 to 2020, including the most recent pieces from his *Indoors* series and important works from his *Personal Manual*, *Theory of Evolution*, and *Origin of the Species* series. Works from his *Ecstasy* series will also be shown in this exhibition.

As one of China's most important Pop artists, Li Bangyao focuses on the symbolic qualities of the structural systems of objects. Through the refinement of specific symbols for social development and everyday life, he deconstructs and encodes the personal aesthetics, collective memories, and social issues symbolized by objects in a visual language characterized by flat forms and clear outlines. Using Pop Art, he responds to Jean Baudrillard's research into the shifting meanings of objects in a consumer society.

Origin of the Species and *Theory of Evolution* are important series in Li Bangyao's study of object-symbols painted after 2005. In *Origin of the Species*, he selects for study typical, everyday consumer objects such as bicycles, sewing machines, kerosene lamps, and commemorative plaques from the 1950s to 1970s. He uses advertising methods and bright monochrome backgrounds to present consumer goods as the subjects of the paintings. The order of truth is transformed into the representation and image of a symbolic spectacle. *Theory of Evolution* juxtaposes grain ration tickets, purchase coupons, and neighborhoods developed by the real estate industry from the time of China's planned economy, highlighting the changes in the mass consumer landscape as China modernized. This is a form of historical memory and a massive spectacle comprised of visual images produced by a consumer society.

Since 2009, Li Bangyao's study of object-symbols has shifted toward the relationships between objects and households. With this in mind, his visits to many households have taken the form of field studies. He wrote, "The states of household objects still surprise me. When a family unit has a certain number of functional products, their use value fades, and they gradually become energy. They begin to manifest the individual's spiritual energy, and the objects start to convey the owner's dreams, memories, hobbies, and values. Because they have these living characteristics, the objects have a kind of warmth."¹ As Li has written, the compositions of *Indoors* allow viewers to savor the numerous object-symbols in family life, reflecting the cultural significance of this glimpse into household political economy. His *Ecstasy* series depicts the corners of interior scenes with the most consumer symbolism; objects such as dressing tables, fashion magazines, and makeup bags are placed in the images one by one. In contrast to his past two-dimensional works, his *Personal Manual* installations make use of digital monochrome etching on aluminum to create a sense of three-dimensionality. In this way, he further removes the functional and use value of objects to accentuate their aesthetic and cultural significance.

Today, the use and exchange value of objects have been transformed into symbolic value. How can we banish the specter of consumerism and resist the seduction of Jean Baudrillard's ecstasy? Through the symbolic study of objects, Li Bangyao produces a mechanism for dialogue and generates an intermediate vehicle. The objects return to their ordinary state, regressing to a covert discourse and signifying something extraordinary.

¹ Li Bangyao, "Guanyu Shinei Yanjiu" (Studies of the Indoors), 2019.