

Li Qing: Lighthouse and Cradle

Curator: Cui Cancan

Opening: 2021.9.12 4pm

Duration: 2021.9.12 - 10.27

Location: The 1st and 2nd space of Tang Contemporary Art Beijing

Tang Contemporary Art is proud to announce the opening of Li Qing's solo exhibition "Lighthouse and Cradle", held in both of the gallery's Beijing spaces on September 12. Curated by Cui Cancan, the exhibition will showcase Li Qing's important series "Window", "Spot the Difference", "Images of Mutual Undoing and Unity", "Hangzhou House", as well as his most recent work from 2021.

The Lighthouse and the Cradle

The "lighthouse" and the "cradle" come from imagery found in the works of Li Qing, and are symbols for Utopia in literature. The exhibition takes "the lighthouse and the cradle" as a starting point and point of embarkation between multiple series, as metaphors for ideals and arrival, as it takes a new look at the continuous stories that have unfolded in Li Qing's works since 2005.

The exhibition is divided into two parts. In an architectural space rendered in the Bauhaus style, symbolizing the cradle of modern design, a temporary tent appearing like a light swaying over the surface of the sea becomes the focus, or bonfire, at the center of the two spaces. Works from the three series "Spot the Differences," "Mutual Undoing," and "Windows" surround the space to the right and left, becoming background noise that leads to reality. A carpet in the ruins of an old house, a kitschy Hangzhou building in a mixture of styles, faces in magazines, the artist's travels, and two giant group portraits of discarded refrigerators draw the gaze to a circuitous, overlapping world. Here, image, sign and reality intertwine, conceal and alternate between one another.

Two worlds, one with maze-like nested chambers carrying a monumental grand narrative, the cradle of Bauhaus, and metaphors of Ilya Kabakov flying into space; the other a multilevel space connected by arches, pulsing with the drifting dust of ruins, the smooth aesthetic of reality, glossy landmark buildings, and a yellow tent like a lighthouse in the grass. Mirror images of reality and interchanging representations, the basic traits of Li Qing's art, thread throughout.

As a leading representative of the new generation painters, Li Qing's creative thread and field of vision are extraordinarily rich. Unlike his peers, his painting no longer focuses on working within the four corners of the picture, but instead constantly expands painting's external space and ways of seeing. In the "Spot the Differences" series, two similar pictures turn seeing into recognition. Which painting is closer to the truth? What is the relationship between painting, with its realist tradition, and reality today? Seeing and truth have become themes of our time. The questioning continues in the "Mutual Undoing" series, where two intertextual images become one in an entirely new picture. The stacked result is further from the truth, resulting in a "reconstruction" that is neither one nor the other. Reconstruction and representation point to the mysteries of painted expression, and the significance of rhetoric.

As an imagining and metaphor for the outside world, the window is the best carrier for "representation." In Li Qing's works, window frames and lattices become part of the structure of the picture, with the wear and tear of the old windows fusing together with the paint and brushwork. Windows are the landscape of the city, carrying stories, restoring hope, dividing distances. Every window has implications of class and power. In his newest works, Li Qing no longer continues the literary character of his past works, or the discussion of time and space. The window returns to itself, referencing the existential relationship between itself, architecture and the city. The structure of the window frame forms a stark contrast with the smooth aesthetics and glossy landmark buildings of the picture. Painting has returned to reality, to a radical aesthetic.

Language never exists in isolation. The uninterrupted experimentation and sustained momentum across these various series are outgrowths of the themes Li Qing has been following since 2005: information and image in the technological age, the social mechanisms and power dynamics of seeing, the relationship between people, architecture and the city amidst globalization, the patterns and disciplining of aesthetics in the consumer age. Between the lofty towers and the swaying tent, the literary implications between the "lighthouse and the cradle" begin to fade and become the antithesis of Utopia.

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About Artist

Li Qing was born in Huzhou, Zhejiang Province in 1981. He lives and works in Hangzhou and Shanghai. His paintings, installations and video works seek rational rifts in similarity and contradiction, acting on the perception and acknowledgment of a viewer through circuitous and overlapped structures. In recent years, his works track the historical fragmentation and ideological conflicts that have occurred widely in the dissemination of information, collective memory, and knowledge experience. Simultaneously, his works are testing the tension and contradiction between image, language, symbol and social space, connecting the multi-level elements of experience in series to construct a conflict structure. The capture of micro-politics in everyday spaces and images, the questioning of political identity in aesthetic tradition, and the observation on the identity of Chinese Art in the context of Global Art, all reflect his historical consciousness among the younger generation of Chinese artists.

Li Qing graduated from the Oil Painting Department of China Academy of Art in 2007. He has had solo shows at Fondazione Prada's Rongzhai, Shanghai, China; Pingshan Art Museum, Shenzhen, China; Zhejiang Art Museum, Hangzhou, China; Tomás y Valiente Art Centre (CEART), Madrid, Spain; Arario Museum, Seoul, Korea; The Orient Foundation, Macao, China; Goethe Institute, Shanghai, China; among others. A number of prestigious art institutes have also included his works for group shows, such as Shanghai Biennale; Prague Biennale; Venice Biennale Special Invitation Exhibition; Gwangju Biennale Special Exhibition; Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, USA; Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan; São Paulo Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC USP), São Paulo, Brasil; Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, San Francisco, USA; Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea; National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia; etc. His works are collected by many art institutes and foundations, such as Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy; Institut Valencia d'Art Modern (IVAM), Valencia, Spain; Rubell Museum, Miami, USA; Deutsche Bank, Germany; Kistefos Museum, Oslo, Norway; Long Museum, Shanghai, China; Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China; K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong, China; Bredin Prat Foundation, Paris, France; Fosun Foundation, Shanghai, China; CC Foundation, Shanghai, China; Arario Museum, Seoul/Jeju, Korea; Zhejiang Art Museum, Hangzhou, China; etc. Li is shortlisted for the Jean-François Prat Prize in 2017.

About Curator

Cui Cancan is an active Chinese independent curator and critic.

Since 2012, he has curated almost 100 major exhibitions, including group exhibitions like Hei Qiao Night Way (2013), Rural Wash, Cut and Blow-dry(2013), FUCKOFF II (2013), Unlived by What is Seen (2014), Between the 5th and 6th Ring Road in Beijing (2015), The Decameron (2016), Rip it Up (2017), Spring Festival Projects (2018), The Curation Workshop (2019) and Nine-Tiered(2020). He has curated artists' solo exhibitions such as Ai Weiwei, Bao Xiaowei, Chen Danqing, Chen Yufan, Chen Yujun, Feng Lin, Han Dong, He Yunchang, Huang Yishan, Jiang Bo, Li Binyuan, Liu Gangshun, Liu Jianhua, Li Qing, Li Zhanyang, Ding Muer, Ma Ke, Mao Yan, Qin Qi, Sui Jianguo, Shijiezi Art Museum, Shi Jinsong, Shen Shaomin, Tan Ping, Wang Qingsong, Xie Nanxing, Xia Xiaowan, Xia Xing, Xiao Yu, Xu Zhongmin, Xu Xiaoguo, Zong Ning, Polit-Sheer-Form, Zhang Yue and Zhao Zhao et cetera.

He has won CCAA (Chinese Contemporary Art Award) Art Review Award for Youth, Critics' Award in Chinese contemporary art by YISHU, Annual Exhibition Award by Art Power 100, Nominee for Lincoln Curator Prize by TANC Asia Prize, The Best Artist Solo Exhibition of the Year Award by Chinese Contemporary Art News, Best Exhibition Award by Gallery Week Beijing, Annual Curator Award by Art Bank, et cetera.