

Chinese Relativity: Part 1

A selection of Contemporary Chinese Painting and Photography

Opening reception: Tuesday, November 21st, 6 to 8 PM
November 21st, 2006 – January 6, 2007

Zhang Dali, Wei Dong, Hong Hao, Yan Lei, Yan Pei Ming, Cai Guo-Qiang, Wang Qingsong, Yang Shaobin, Cang Xin

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Stux Gallery is pleased to present *Chinese Relativity*, a selection of Contemporary Chinese painting and photography. Focusing, primarily, on the identity of the individual in relation to the socio-political situation from which it occurred, this exhibition is to serve as a cross section, rather than an absolute statement, of Contemporary Chinese painting and photography today. Stemming, in part, from increasing cultural globalization, large exhibitions such as the Taipei, Gwangju and Shanghai biennials have introduced Contemporary Chinese art and artists to the global stage. This increased interest can be traced, overtime, alongside political upheaval starting with the death of Mao Tse-tung in 1978 and the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

The 1990's saw China's shift toward an open market economy and the emergence of Political Pop as a popular trend among painters in China. This began with the general appropriation of Western Pop with American icons replaced with elements from earlier Chinese propaganda posters (commonly seen during the Cultural Revolution). With time, these icons were replaced with symbols from everyday life (**Hong Hao, Yan Lei, Yan Pei Ming**) and Chinese history and tended to feature cheerful colors and an irreverent attitude. This Pop style was followed by, among others, Neo-Reality and Neo-Figuration (**Yang Shaobin**), where emphasis was placed on everyday life, new political boldness and explicit personal and social awareness.

Spurred further by the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, artists began to search out alternative environments in which to make their art under a less stifling regime (**Cai Guo-Qiang, Wei Dong**). With an increase in migration of artists from Mainland China to the West and back, opportunity arose for a great crossover and exchange of ideas. It is during this period that we see the growth of experimental media originally banned in China, such as performance and installation art, and a surge in the use of photography (**Zhang Dali, Wang Qingsong, Cang Xin**) to document a more open and radical form of contemporary Chinese art.

Severe political turmoil is bound to have a powerful relative effect on not only practicing artists, but on the uncharted urban landscape that they inhabit. This landscape included the mid-twentieth century art schools and academies of the People's Republic of China, heavily ensconced in technical schooling and laden with a hefty dose of realism. Such schooling geared artists of the time to focus on Soviet socialist realism -- "art for the people" -- in an attempt to build support for the presiding political forces. The imprint left by this academic system on the artists of the 1980's and 1990's would be a significant one felt in the works of Chinese artists for many years to come.

-Joshua Altman

For further information please contact the gallery at Joshua@stuxgallery.com