

PearlLam Galleries

Shanghai

Mehmet Ali Uysal solo exhibition 'The Past'



Mehmet Ali Uysal (b. 1976), **Suspended Series/Meat** (2014)
Polyester, steel hooks, 150 x 150 x 35 cm (59 1/10 x 59 1/10 x 13 4/5 in.)

Exhibition Dates

1 September–15 November, 2014

Monday–Sunday, 10:30am–7pm

Opening reception: Wednesday, 3 September, 2014, 5–7pm

Pearl Lam Galleries, 181 Middle Jiangxi Road, G/F, Shanghai, China 200002

Shanghai—Pearl Lam Galleries is pleased to present *The Past*, the first solo exhibition in China by Turkish artist Mehmet Ali Uysal. Uysal will present two news series of sculptural and installation work, *Suspended* and *Painting*, which explore the concept of value in art as a cultural production and commodity. At the core of his artistic practice is a questioning of contemporary art, its institutions, and the art market.

Growing up in Turkey, Uysal's first visits to European museums as a young adult left an indelible mark on him. The artist recounts how his encounters with the institutions and modes of display in the West left him both exhilarated and frustrated. The cultural achievements of the past as viewed from a Western perspective were unfolding before his eyes, but at the same time there was a distinct feeling that history was being revisited as a spectacle, highlighting for him the relationship between art and commodification. Furthermore, the West's domination of art history and the absence of counter-narratives in a globalised world exposed an imbalance in how non-Western art is historicised and received. Uysal is particularly concerned by the homogenisation of art production, and the proliferation of satellite museums and other institutions based on Western models in the Middle East and China. His response is to challenge how art is valued and experienced in space.

Suspended is a series of gilded frames that hang solemnly on the gallery walls, devoid of obvious subject matter and recontextualised. Originally conceived as elaborate designs to accentuate the aesthetic and monetary value of a work of art, the frames no longer delineate a composition. Stripped of any formal function, ostentation and pageantry, they hang distorted against the backdrop of the white gallery space. Ostensibly redundant, the frames are elevated by the artist to a work of art, thus reversing their objectification. Uysal's intervention, transforming the symbolic values of an object to a higher value, acts as a criticism against a system that is determined by an ever-growing art market.

Uysal extends the criticism of symbolic value to the idea of the white cube and the relationship between the work of art and space. In his *Painting* series, the works are not immediately visible in the gallery and appear to hover somewhere between presence and absence. The artist challenges the perception of the viewer, who at first instance sees an empty wall. As the eyes adjust to the whiteness, the outlines of frames appear to protrude from the walls like a ghostly presence. *Painting* embodies and is embodied by the gallery space, blurring the line between the two. Where does the work of art end and where does the gallery begin? The embedded blank frames of a bygone era question the changing value of painting, as well as the interdependence between the work of art, the gallery, the museum, and the market.

Uysal's engagement with the concept of value in an artwork acts as a framework for an understanding of contemporary art practices, which are rooted in the past and perpetuated in the present.

About Mehmet Ali Uysal

Mehmet Ali Uysal was born in Mersin, Turkey in 1976. He studied architecture and received his PhD from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Hacettepe University in 2009 before completing an MFA in sculpture in 2005 at the same institution. Currently, he lives and works in Ankara, Turkey.

His work can be found in numerous private and public collections including Vehbi Koç Foundation Collection, and Ozyegin University Collection in Istanbul. International collections include Le Vent des Forêts Festival Public Collection, Meuse, France; Chaufontaine Parks Public Collection, Liege, Belgium; Audi Collection (Audi Bank Lebanon) Beirut, Lebanon; Golden Harvest Group Art Collection, India; Samdani Art Foundation, Bangladesh; and the City of Umeå, Sweden Collection (2014 Culture Capital of Europe), Sweden.

Major solo exhibitions include *Pinch Me Awake*, Stiftungstarke, Berlin; *Painting*, Pi Artworks, Istanbul (both 2013); *Peel*, the Nesrin Esirtgen Collection, Istanbul (2012); *Malist*, Q Contemporary, Beirut (2011); and *Mist*, Etemad Gallery, Dubai (2011). Group exhibitions and art fair participation includes Art Basel Hong Kong (2013), *Eyeballing* at the Ankara Contemporary Arts Center (2012), and *Figure Out* (2012) at Art Saw, Dubai, as well as *Trade Routes* at Pi Artworks Istanbul (2011).

About Pearl Lam Galleries

Founded by Pearl Lam, Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. With over 20 years of experience exhibiting Asian and Western art and design, it is one of the leading and most established contemporary art galleries to be launched out of China.

Playing a vital role in stimulating international dialogue on Chinese and Asian contemporary art, the Galleries is dedicated to championing artists who re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice from the region. The Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore collaborate with renowned curators, each presenting distinct programming from major solo exhibitions, special projects and installations to conceptually rigorous group shows. Based on the philosophy of Chinese Literati where art forms have no hierarchy, Pearl Lam Galleries is dedicated to breaking down boundaries between different disciplines, with a unique gallery model committed to encouraging cross-cultural exchange.

Contemporary Chinese Abstract art is heavily represented in the Galleries roster. Influential Chinese artists Zhu Jinshi and Su Xiaobai, who synthesise Chinese sensibilities with an international visual language, are presented internationally with work now included in major private and public collections worldwide. The Galleries has also introduced leading international artists such as Jenny Holzer, Jim Lambie and Yinka Shonibare MBE (RA) to markets in the region, providing opportunities for new audiences in Asia to encounter their work. Pearl Lam Galleries encourages international artists to create new work which engages specifically with the region—collaborating to produce thought-provoking and culturally relevant work.

Pearl Lam Design shows works by established and emerging international designers, including Maarten Baas, Mattia Bonetti, André Dubreuil, and Studio Makkink & Bey, in exhibitions and design fairs around the world. They are invited to push the boundaries of traditional Chinese art and craft techniques and create new works that reflect their experiences in China. A fourth gallery and concept store devoted solely to design will open shortly in Shanghai.

Press Enquiries

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