

CONTRASTS GALLERY presents

contrasts

Li Tian-Bing: Childhood Fantasy

September 5 – October 9, 2010

SHANGHAI–*Childhood Fantasy*, the first solo exhibition of paintings by Li Tian-bing in China, will be on view at Contrasts Gallery, No 181 Middle Jiangxi Road, g/f, Shanghai, China September 5-October 9, 2010.

Li Tian-bing's paintings are haunted by memory and an acute awareness of recent Chinese social history. The artist, who was born in Guilin, China in 1974, creates poetic images where, in his words, "reality and fiction are mixed together."

While Li uses old photographs as the source of his works, mimicking their blurred focus, subtle tonalities and surface blemishes, his work is not Photo-Realism. The work evokes both Li's own childhood, as an only child, and the great changes, which China is currently undergoing. He paints fluidly, allowing the evidence of his hand to show, and transforms photographs by melding them with other images or new figures, painted in brighter monochrome colors. Oil painting, in the artist's words, is the ideal medium to merge "privacy, intimacy, currency and memory all together, in the process of "gradually visualizing...personal phenomenon."

Li Tian-bing's paintings reflect both his recovery of the past and his cross-cultural experiences, including his studying painting in Paris, where he maintains a studio. Although Li has shown his paintings extensively in New York, France and Switzerland, this is his first gallery exhibition in China.

In the past, Li has created paintings that evoke cultural duality and the isolation he felt growing up, due to China's one-child policy. He has often depicted himself with images of a fictional brother. In this exhibition, Li continues his exploration of memories, layering the present and the rapidly disappearing past in a single image, a childhood fantasy.

The exhibition includes a number of works that depict war games played by children. In *Bataille devant la Propagande (Battle Before the Propaganda)* conveys a group of teenagers carrying the guns, stood in front of the wall on which commercial promotions mixed with political slogans in different times. The work reflects the artist's concern

with media control – both the propaganda of the '70's and today's commercial promotions and publicity. The painting embodies the children's reaction, in the form of war. In ***Bataille Vert sur le Champs (Green Battle on the Field)*** illustrates a group of ghostly child soldiers, some gray, some green, implying a similar dynamic of overwhelming societal pressures and the impulse to resist. ***Autoportrait devant le Tableau d'affichage (Self-Portrait in Front of Bulletin Board)*** illustrates the young artist (from the 1970s) standing in front of the contemporary bulletin board. The context of the bulletin board has been replaced by various heated social issues.

In the exhibition, Li paints himself at different ages and in different backgrounds: ***Rêve-Atelier (Dream-Studio)*** and ***Autoportrait Vert dans L'atelier (Green Self-Portrait in the Studio)*** both feature his studio in Paris where he made the two paintings. Both works are dominated by the transparent face of the artist as a young boy, through which we can see the room beyond.

Autoportrait-Campagne (Self-Portrait – Countryside) was inspired by Li's recent trip to Guilin, his birthplace in China. ***Rêve-Théâtre (Dream-Theatre)*** is based on a memory of an old theater and ***Haut-Parleurs (Loudspeakers)*** is a vision of a red city with megaphones everywhere, and the large green face of a child covering his ears. It reflects a society that has been suffocated by noise and propaganda. ***Vivre sur l'arbre (Living in a Tree)*** depicts a boy as a Chinese anchorite, who has chosen to live in a tree, away from society, protecting himself as an outcast from the world. ***Autoportrait Vert Avec La forêt (Green Self-portrait in Forest)***, portrays a shift in space and time. The young artist is placed in a snow—covered landscape of a typical western forest.

About Li Tian-bing

Excelling in art as a child, Li trained in China, both in traditional technique and Western realism. Li completed his studies at the Institute in International Relations in Beijing, and then went on to study oil painting at the École Supérieure Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris, graduating in 2002. Along with other contemporary Chinese painters, Li's work reflects a series of defining dichotomies existing in China today: East and West, communism and capitalism, ancient culture and modern consumerism.

About Contrasts Gallery

Since its inception in 1992, Contrasts Gallery has showcased leading contemporary Chinese artists, and has brought the work of international artist to China. The gallery's exhibitions have stressed the rich history of China's art and artists who have reinvented its legacy in order to express their feelings about change in China today. The gallery has evolved from a philosophy rooted in the tradition of Chinese Literati art, which promotes

art for the sake self-cultivation and embraces creativity without hierarchies. Contrast's exhibition program is designed to create new cultural exchanges between artist from the East and the West, working in divergent traditions and across disciplines. The gallery's 2010 schedule includes exhibitions by many of today's most prominent Chinese artists: Shao Fan, Zhang Hao, Wei Ligang, Li Tianbing, Lan Zhenghui and Yi Zhou. Contrasts Gallery is based in Shanghai. www.contrastsgallery.com

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