

ARTFORUM

Qiu Xiaofei

UNIVERSALSTUDIOS-BEIJING | BOERSLI GALLERY | U空间

No.A-8 Caochangdi,(P.O.box No.71 Dashanzi),Chao Yang District | 北京市朝阳区草场地村甲八号

March 8–April 6



Ruins 1, 2007, wood and oil paint, dimensions variable.

It may be the relative lack of installation work in China that makes Qiu Xiaofei's current exhibition seem especially satisfying. Or perhaps one can read Xiaofei's work as a clever twist on the medium of painting, undoubtedly the most popular one among contemporary Chinese artists. In "House of Recollected Fragments," he remakes objects as his own by painting them, as in his earlier work, but this time viewers are dwarfed by his vision. Xiaofei's third exhibition in as many years is essentially an extension of previous themes—objects of nostalgia, childhood memories, and dreams are transformed into thickly painted parodies of themselves—but it has a new maturity and importance. His choice of subjects has also progressed slightly, from the representation of static, dispassionate objects to imaginary scenes charged with the artist's emotion and sentiments.

The exhibition is dominated by a flat, brilliant white "ice rink" that has been shredded into bloodstained tracks—cut by the sharp blades of the skates that are pinned to the wall. Arranged around this circular rink are smaller, loosely related works. In one, a meat grinder spills piles of grim, raw product on a table, the realization of a recurring childhood dream occasioned by preparations for holiday cooking. In another, a half-burned mosquito coil serves as a symbolic reminder of waiting home alone while both parents were at work; furthering this theme, on an adjacent wall hang two blown-up photos of the artist as a child, laughing. These images are slightly different, reflecting a split personality that many children of the "one-child policy" dealt with. Two enormous stacks of wooden blocks painted with life-size geometric windowpanes, a clock, and Russian-style onion domes dominate the gallery entryway.

The only work that seems out of sync, at least stylistically, is *Night at the Museum*, 2008, which is perhaps a subversive fantasy of the artist's adult life: In a startling white environment hang the variety of molded plaster frames found in a traditional museum, each sloshed with black paint. This is the "work" of a dripping, headless, and hulking figure made of the same plaster, an alter ego who has defaced the floor and walls in what can be seen as a commentary on the traditional art machine. The exhibition hints at new, more ambitious directions for this young artist.

—Lee Ambroazy

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