



Liao Guohe: BURN WITCHES

08 Sept. - 20 Oct., 2018

opening: 07 Sept., 5-7pm | 6pm: a special walk-through with the artist and Kris Ercums, Global Contemporary Art and Asian Art Curator, Spencer Museum, University of Kansas

08 Sept., 4pm: artist talk with Wang Xin, independent curator and PhD candidate at Institute of Fine Art, New York University
24 E 81st St, New York

Boers-Li Gallery is pleased to announce BURN WITCHES, Liao Guohe's New York debut solo exhibition. The paintings in this latest series demonstrate Liao's quintessential style - superficially rough, apparently crude, but with an effective, direct compositional touch, and complex emotional impact. In this series, Liao's concern for justice and his reflections on the infrastructure and social consequences of power are delivered with the irreverence, cracked humor and lack of self-righteousness that are typical of his work.

Since he left his Hunan hometown for the capital two years ago, Liao has found himself at the receiving end of the disruption and uncertainty which have been a disconcerting aspect of China's centrally planned urban development and political restructuring. These new paintings were conceived in 2017 and 2018 when Liao, like many other artists in Beijing, was caught up in a flurry of dislocation – forced to move his home-turned-studio three times.

In order to deal with this ongoing itinerancy, Liao began to experiment with light-weight ready-made fabric in place of canvas. Serendipitously, while shopping at a wholesale fabric market, he came upon a smiley face, resembling the familiar emoji, but with something not quite right about it – the perfect image for his witch. In this series, the image of the witch is accompanied by the Chinese character “gan”, a familiar element in bureaucratic exhortations to hard work and perseverance. Liao sees both those who give and those who take orders as elements of an association that is superficial, comical, and tragic. Smiling faces and encouragement to “joyful work” comprise the flimsy veneer of a synthetic and disconcerting social dynamic.

Liao has developed a systematic visual language that allows him to speak out about the social climate in China and beyond. Often threaded through a thematic, non-linear narrative, Liao's serial paintings challenge the strictures of text vis-à-vis image by juxtaposing Chinese characters with ingenious symbols and idiosyncratic elements. Over time, his rough and simple style has become rougher and simpler, as he eschews embellishment for impact. Traditional Chinese painters often incorporated poetry into their work. Liao updates the tradition with an intentionally indelicate approach and with a straight forward immediacy of line and image shaped by a moral urgency that imparts mass and velocity to his irony.

Born in 1977 in Changsha, Liao Guohe has recently relocated his studio to Beijing. His works were the subject of solo exhibitions at Beijing Minsheng Art Museum in 2016 and Sifang Art Museum in 2014. He has participated in group shows including, Drawing Pogo at Taikang Space (2017), Le Grand Balcon: La Biennale de Montreal at the Musée Contemporaine de Montreal, Canada (2016); A Hundred Years of Shame - Songs of Resistance and Scenarios for Chinese Nations, Para Site, Hong Kong (2015). His works are in public and private collections worldwide.

For more information, please contact:

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