

Ecstasy + Dose: Yan Lei Solo Exhibition

Dates: June 01 - July 14, 2019

Address: D-06, 798 Art Zone, No.2 Jiuxianqiao Road, Chaoyang District, Beijing, China

Boers-Li Gallery is delighted to announce the opening of Yan Lei's solo exhibition, "Ecstasy + Dose" on June 1st, with a live performance "Surgical" presented by the artist CondonOxy, Modern Sky and Night Museum at the Chao Art Center on May 31, 2019.

Yan Lei is among the first generation of conceptual artists working across different mediums, whose indiscriminate adoption of painting, photography, video, performance and installation, has always been geared towards articulating, manifesting and negotiating the dynamics between the local and the global, the center and the periphery, the powerful and the disempowered, if not to address the constantly shifting grounds of social, political and economic variables under the global condition.

Notoriously known for hoaxing his peers with forged invitation letters sent from *Documenta's* curatorial committee (*Invitation*, 1997) with his and Hong Hao's name written in reverse signed, and a series of works including *May I see your Work? Are you in that exhibition that goes to Germany?* from the late 1990s. Yan Lei's prankster gesture translated both the psyche of many Chinese artists at the time, thirsty for visibility and opportunity to engage with the global art world, while negotiating the power dynamics between the burgeoning contemporary Chinese art world vis-à-vis the global art power the artist contented.

With more than two decades of conceptual art practice under his belt, Yan Lei remains skeptical of the productivity of the art system, its uneven and erratic value exchange, the dominance of the art market and its impact on artistic production, to Yan Lei, reveal certain malaise, and its limitations hinder the production of value and meaning. Akin to his interventions in 1997, the line up of the performance, "Surgical" and the solo exhibition, "Ecstasy +Dose" aim to heighten the audience's sensorial experiences to cure, rehabilitate, or even reboot the system.

Having brought the famous Beijing punk band Brain Failure to the 10th Istanbul Biennale in 2007, the recording of their performance at the nightclub Dogzstar, fitted under the Biennale's overarching theme, "Not only possible but also necessary: Optimism in the Age of Global War". This time, Yan Lei adopts means outside of the conventional frameworks for artistic production again. His new noise band, CondonOxy, consists of the artist himself and the former member of Brain Failure, Xu Cong. The title of the band is a neologism that plays off the spelling of the trade name, Oxycontin (for the prescription medication Oxycodone, for alleviation of pain, altering sensation, increase empathy and pleasure), to offer the audience a euphoric experience that aims expel the surplus information on their minds. The performance will include a five-chapter act, 1.Forum; 2.Climbing Space; 3.Surgery; 4.Atmosphere; and 5.Landing.

The exhibition at the gallery, "Ecstasy + Dose" opening on the following day, conjures key notions from Yan Lei's practice, where one will discover the artist's inspiration from Duchamp's adoption of the readymade, limitations in existing artistic forms, the subjectivity of the "auteur", as well as, Andy Warhol's radical strategy of Pop Art, marked by his factory production process. Yan Lei applies these notions in his own context and approaches with an acknowledgment to the heightened global conditions, including

the advent of new technology, the unsettling global politics in constant flux, as well as, the artist's iconoclastic position to what painting means in the 21st century.

The three paintings on view, the portraits of an unidentified boy, *Tata* (2011), *Edison Chen* (2019) and *Whomever You don't know is art* (2019) depicting the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un clapping his hands with deadpan facial expression, all of which were painted with Yan Lei's well-known painting-by-number strategy by his studio staff.

Moreover, his iconic "color wheel" series is presented with the added effect of lenticular printing - an early photographic technique, where the perception of the multiple images relies on the shifting position of the viewer. This series reinforces Yan Lei's position that "painting, after all, is just a mindless representation of an image you might see in a photograph". Moreover, the added processing further warps the abstract color rings, to suggest that technology as an added medium can obscure the human perception, hence the production of knowledge and meaning.

Lastly, *Rêverie 3.0* (2019), an automatically motorized tower, stacked up by several wheels spins in alternating clockwise and counter-clockwise directions, exhibits hundreds of images Yan Lei has amassed over the years. Each picture consists multiple images, for example, a picture of daisies, Casper David Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818) and a detail of the CCTV tower can be found within the same frame. Unlike the *Rêverie Rest* (2018) Yan Lei presented in "Datumsoria: The Return of the Real", at ZKM and Chronus Art Center, making aware that in the age of the Internet and Artificial Intelligence the production of meaning is as multifaceted as it is unstable and can sometimes be perilous. Yan Lei's current choice of a low-fi technology, further enhances this notion, that it may not be the advent of newer and better technology that will bring about the truth. However, holding a fixed position of perception (in this case, that of the viewer) would certainly hinder one from accessing it.

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