

MASSIMODECARLO

BETWEEN UTOPIA AND DYSTOPIA:
JIA AILI, LIU XINYI, MENG HUANG,
QIU SHIHUA, WANG SISHUN, WANG ZHONGJIE

Massimo De Carlo Gallery is pleased to present *Between Utopia and Dystopia*, a group show that brings together, for the first time in the Hong Kong gallery, works by six leading contemporary Chinese artists. Curated by independent curator and critic Manuela Lietti, the exhibition opens on January 19 and explores the notion of landscape, touching upon its cultural, social, and geo-political implications. *Between Utopia and Dystopia* offers a view on the conceptual and naturalistic interpretations of landscape in contemporary Chinese painting and sculpture by artists belonging to different generations and backgrounds. Jia Aili, Liu Xinyi, Meng Huang, Qiu Shihua, Wang Sishun, and Wang Zhongjie spend most of their time in mainland China. All of them approach the topic from their own unique perspectives; they created landscapes suspended between the real and the ideal dimensions. External sights and inner visions filled with intimacy and meditative tones co-exist with images of a collapsing world presented with less idyllic but nevertheless true qualities.

Jia Aili cleverly juxtaposes a contemporary approach with a traditional figurative style. His abstract, fragmented landscapes are often interrupted by subjects that appear to be searching or drifting. Every landscape is private, presenting the inner self rather than contemporary society in general, even though Jia's paintings also reflect the increasing lack of communication between man and the world he inhabits. Therefore, Jia's works are often melancholic in their contemplation of a world that is increasingly connected yet lonely, in which borders are not just physical entities but also self-imposed states of mind.

Liu Xinyi's work often displays a rather unexpected double nature, undermining the viewer's certainty about reality, its perception, and the mechanisms underlying the cognitive processes that regulate it. The landscapes in his work are often territories marked by their geo-political importance and strategic place within the global world, and presented with a certain amount of irony and, at times, cynicism.

Meng Huang has painted the local landscapes familiar to him since 2004. His landscape paintings are characterized by the use of a specific color palette based mainly on two tones, black and white, as well as the mixture of the two in a wide array of grays. This reminds us of the severity and monotony of a geological map, which transform landscape painting into a topographical survey. The choice of this austere color palette celebrates non-spaces that seem to be part of a world at its end, collapsing and imploding under its own weight.

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At first glance, Qiu Shihua's works appear to be monochrome: an almost completely white canvas. However, on closer inspection, expansive landscapes emerge from the painterly surfaces, which, depending on the viewer's taste and disposition, thrive with detail or recede again from view. The artist creates broad landscapes in neutral colors applied in an apparently minimalist style that is a process of meditation rather than mimesis. The mysterious depth of Qiu's painting plays with the eye of the beholder, blurring the balance between medium and gaze.

In his artistic practice, Wang Sishun decontextualizes and deconstructs objects by turning them into something aesthetically and conceptually new and unexpected. In his site-specific, immersive installations, he enhances the transformation of materials by ensuring that the objects interact and engage with one another in a subtle narrative. He creates a landscape where the natural engages with the conceptual and the artificial in an unexpected yet visually compelling game involving sight, perception, and preconception.

Since 2009, images and narratives have appeared less often in Wang Zhongjie's paintings. Over the course of two years, he gradually removed layer after layer of excess information. After pain and doubt, his paintings have become more abstract and he has turned them into the meeting point of pure substance and elusive visions. Light plays a key role in these abstractions; it dominates the canvases by becoming and embodying the landscape itself.

BIOGRAPHIES

Jia Aili was born in 1979 in Liaoning Province, China. Lives and works in Beijing, China. Solo exhibitions include *The Nothing of Pure Emptiness*, Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, Beijing, CN (2010); *The Dharma Bums*, Hartell Gallery, Cornell University, Ithaca, US (2010); *JAL Jia Aili Solo Exhibition*, Michael Ku Gallery, Taipei, TW (2009); *The Wasteland*, Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, Beijing, CN (2007). Group exhibitions include *Shedding—New Art from China*, Zhong Gallery, Berlin, DE (2012); *Fly Through the Troposphere: Memo of the New Generation Painting*, Iberia Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, CN (2011); *Lu Chunsheng and Jia Aili: Counterpoints*, Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts), London, GB (2010).

Liu Xinyi was born in 1982 in Hangzhou, China. Lives and works in Beijing, China. Solo exhibitions include *Hundred Thousand Miles Away*, White Space Beijing, Beijing, CN (2016); *Goulash*, White Space Beijing, Beijing, CN (2014); *Agent L*, White Space Beijing, Beijing, CN (2012).

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Group exhibitions include *Hybridizing Earth-Discussing Multitude*, Busan Biennale 2016, Busan, ROK (2016); *Turning Point: Contemporary Art in China Since 2000*, Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai, CN (2016); *Film*, Art Basel HK, Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong, CN (2015); *The Invisible Hand: Curating as Gesture*, 2nd CAFAM Biennale, CAFA Art Museum, Beijing, CN (2014); *On | Off: China's Young Artists in Concept and Practice*, Ullens Center of Contemporary Art, Beijing, CN (2013); *Contested Ground*, Zabłudowicz Collection, London, UK (2009).

Meng Huang was born in 1966 in Beijing, China. Lives and works in Beijing, China and Berlin, Germany. Solo exhibitions include *Who Are You What Place Is This For Which Purpose Did You Come Here*, Mao Space, Shanghai, CN (2016); *Elbow Room*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing, CN (2014); *Five Faces of a Man*, WiE Kultur, Berlin, DE (2010); *Time and Place – Meng Huang's Solo Exhibition*, BizArt Art Center, Shanghai, CN (2009). Group exhibitions include *Topo ing Rame*, BMW Foundation, Berlin, DE (2016); *Il Giardino Incantato*, Palazzo Tè, Mantova, IT (2015); *Hans van Dijk: 5000 Names*, UCCA, Beijing, CN; Kunsthall Rotterdam, Rotterdam, NL (2014); *FUCK OFF 2*, Groninger Museum, Groningen, NL (2013); *CAPITAL - Merchants in Venice and Amsterdam*, Swiss National Museum, Zurich, CH (2012).

Qiu Shihua was born in 1940 in Sichuan Province, China. Lives and works in Beijing and Shenzhen, China. Solo exhibitions include *Aura of Nature*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, DE (2015); *Qiu Shihua – New Works*, Galerie Urs Meile, Lucerne, CH (2013); *Qiu Shihua. White Field*, Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, DE (2012); *Qiu Shihua*, Shanghai Gallery of Art, Shanghai, China, CN (2008); *Qiu Shi-hua*, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, CH (1999). Group exhibitions include *Ink and the Mind: Ink and Phenomenology Exhibition No. 2*, Ink Studio, Beijing, CN (2016); *Unscrolled: Reframing Tradition in Chinese Contemporary Art*, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, CA (2014); *Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, US (2013); *Duchamp' Inframince in Painting – First Zhuangzi International Conference Parallel Exhibition*, Yuan Art Museum, Beijing, CN (2012).

Wang Sishun was born in 1979 in Hubei Province, China. Lives and works in Beijing, China. Solo exhibitions include *Apocalypse*, Long March Space, Beijing, CN (2016); *Truth*, New Galerie, Paris, FR (2015); *The Indeterminate Boundless*, Goethe Open Space, Shanghai, CN (2013). Group exhibitions include *The New Sculpture Since the 21st Century of Exploration and Transformation*, Big House Contemporary Art Center, Wuhan, CN (2016); *A Beautiful Disorder*, Cass Sculpture Foundation, Sussex, GB (2016); *Inventing Ritual*, Kunsthhaus Graz, Graz, AT (2015); *ON/OFF: China's Young Artists in Concept & Practice*, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, CN (2013); *Moving Image in China 1988-2011*, Luigi Pecci Centre for Contemporary Art, Prato, IT (2012).

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Wang Zhongjie was born in 1972 in Henan Province, China. Lives and works in Henan Province, China. Solo exhibitions include *In Need of Light*, Moart Space, Zhengzhou, CN (2016); *Dark Clouds Blue Sky*, ANART and V ART CENTER, Shanghai, CN (2013); *Stalker and His Shadow*, Magician Space, Beijing, CN (2012). Group exhibitions include *Oltre la materia – Gli artisti ricordano Maurizio Giuffredi*, Bologna Academy of Fine Arts, Bologna, IT (2015); *Sun Artists Group Exhibition*, ANART, Shanghai, CN (2012); *Endless Country: The North-South Oil Painting Exhibition*, China National Gallery, Beijing, CN (2006); *Henan Oil Painting Society Academic Exhibition*, Zhengzhou Art Museum, Zhengzhou, CN (2002).

Hard Facts:

Massimo De Carlo, Hong Kong 3F, Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong

January 20, 2017 to March 11, 2017

Open Tuesday to Saturday, 10:30am – 7.00pm

Opening: Thursday, January 19, 2017

For further information and materials:

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