

# Li Gang

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Exhibition in Beijing: 5.11.2016 – 19.2.2017

Opening: Saturday, November 5, 2016, 4–6 pm

Galerie Urs Meile is pleased to announce the opening of *Li Gang*, the fifth solo exhibition by Chinese artist Li Gang (b. 1986 in Dali, Yunnan Province, China). The exhibition's works are divided into two main categories: paintings and sculptures. The entire exhibition revolves around 'the aesthetics of imperfection' as a tone and starting point.

Li Gang's artistic practice originated in painting, and the language he has developed is unique. It travels between the figurative and the abstract and hides the ontological point that the artist started from: a deep reflection on the existence of painting itself. In the *Oil Painting* series (*Oil Painting*, 2016, oil on hand-made canvas, 125 × 122 cm), the artist attempts to let painting return to its original form through deconstruction and reconstruction. This is to both discover new possibilities for drawing and also emphasize the composition of oil paint itself. Limited by neither creative theme nor approach, it is the main method of the artist's long-term in-depth exploration of painting's boundaries. The show will include a number of his recent paintings.

Sculpture is the second main category of Li Gang's artistic expressions. He experiments with diverse materials that often carry specific meaning in traditional Chinese culture. By playing with materials and techniques the artist creates autonomous, abstract sculptures.

Among other sculptures in the exhibition, the *Gravity* series (*Gravity 6*, 2016, jade bracelets, steel tubes, 350 × 91 × 75 cm) is about seeing and capturing male-female relationships within a population of migrants. Working in jade and steel, the artist obfuscates the normal functional purposes of the materials, instead emphasizing that the two materials together constitute a unique aesthetic. The work is a realization of the artist's pursuit of a realistic means of metaphoric expression.

To create *Dessert* (2015, plaster, rebar, hair, discarded kettles and pots, 32 pcs, sizes vary from 43 × 30 × 30 cm to 85 × 78 × 78 cm), Li Gang used human hair and plaster, as well as the discarded kettles and pots of migrant workers. In fact, he combined a diverse array of materials and items that migrants use in their daily life. The connection of human hair – in this case the artist collected hair from the migrants – and plaster is a technique traditionally used to stabilize walls. While plaster gives the flexibility to create any kind of shape, the hair is used to stabilize and avoid cracks. These unexpected material combinations reach not only a singular beauty, but an immediate reflection of the artist's understanding of reality.

*False or True* (2014-2016, 220 × 122 × 122 cm (machine); 12 × 16 × 16 cm (sculpture 1); 16 × 23 × 17 cm (sculpture 2); 24 × 26 × 23 cm (sculpture 3); 19 × 25 × 15 cm (sculpture 4)) is an experimental work that explores aura and space. The artist uses mechanical principles to collect water from the air of the spaces. Water droplets that form from the air are collected by gypsum cement powder. They then solidify arbitrarily into different spatial sculptures according to the rate at which the water drips. This is how he achieves the visualization of auras. On the exhibition's opening day, this machine, designed by the artist, will operate and create in real-time.

Li Gang was born in Dali, Yunnan Province in 1986 and studied oil painting at Yunnan Dali Academy in Dali, as well as art at the Central Academy of Fine Arts' Department of Experimental Art in Beijing. His recent exhibitions include: *Inventing Ritual*, Louis Vuitton Foundation Museum, Paris, France (2016); *CONFRONTING ANITYA Oriental Experience in Contemporary Art*, Gasometer Kulturzentrum, Liechtenstein (2016); and *Inside China: L'Intérieur du Géant*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2014) which then toured to K11 Art Foundation Pop-up Space in Hong Kong and chi K11 art museum in Shanghai in 2015. In addition, he has also participated in influential biennials including The 6th Moscow Biennial (2015) and The 3rd Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art (2015).