

# Li Gang

Salt Road

Exhibition in Lucerne: 21.8.–1.11.2014

Opening: Thursday, August 21, 2014, 6–8 pm

Galerie Urs Meile is pleased to announce the opening of *Salt Road*, the second solo exhibition by Li Gang (\*1986 in Dali, Yunnan Province, lives and works in Beijing, China) at our Lucerne gallery. Li Gang studied painting, but went on to experiment with a wide range of media and materials. He wants his art to stay fresh and committing to only one medium would limit him too much. With Li Gang you never know which form his next group of works will take on. His art has no recognizable style, the common ground lies deeper: in Li Gang's interest in transformation. This concern encompasses both: his own growth as an artist and the transformation of ordinary objects into art works. His aim is to create art, which is more than just a reproduction or copy of reality, and he challenges himself with all kinds of unusual materials: dead trees, waste from exhaust emissions, cement, stones and hemp string.

Often the choice of material is significant as in the work *The End - 2013.12* (2014, waste materials from exhaust pipes of cars and water, five bars of ink, each 1.2 × 2.2 × 11.5 cm). Li Gang altered the production process of Chinese ink, which is traditionally made out of soot collected over burning pine wood and mixed with glue. Li Gang used the waste materials from car fumes instead to create a toxic, but actually useable set of ink bars.

Also for the third version of this series, *Beads No. 3* (2013, wooden spheres, shaped from the connecting points of a dead tree from Yunnan Province, 504 pcs., ø 0.8 - ø 78 cm) the choice of material is relevant. Li Gang had 504 wooden spheres shaped from the parts of a dead tree, where the branches connect to the trunk, the roots divide and the boughs bifurcate. He did choose this part of the tree because it represents to him the origin of something new, the core of a fresh endeavor and the beginning of an emerging connection to the world. To him a tree is like a person's life and relationships. Life is not linear, we grow and we connect, we explore new paths, it is a constant trial and error, a constant reaching out and retrieving.

Another group of works is also based on the idea of connecting: *Alienation* (2013, stones and glue, 200 × 60 × 50 cm), *Vertical* (2014, stones and glue, 181 × 21 × 21 cm), *Forgiving* (2014, stones and glue, 70 × 68 × 14 cm), *Not Wrong* (2014, stones and glue, 49 × 62 × 12 cm), *Ist May* (2014, stones and glue, 71 × 53 × 9 cm). Li Gang joins large pebble stones with glue, which he uses like modeling clay, creating a shape that harmoniously connects the different ridges of the stones. Herewith the artist makes hidden connections of seemingly unrelated objects visible and combines them in hanging sculptures or objects that are reminiscent of frames.

Li Gang's paintings are situated between figuration and abstraction (*Mid-February* (2014, oil on hand-made canvas, 123 × 122 cm), *Ornamental Carp* (2014, oil on hand-made canvas, 162 × 178 cm), *Description* (2014, oil on hand-made canvas, 162 × 182 cm), *Painting the Sky* (2014, oil on hand-made canvas, 166 × 186 cm) and *March* (2014, oil on hand-made canvas, 107 × 102 cm)). The canvases are made of handmade hemp string and were produced in Li Gang's hometown in Yunnan province. Their subjects are enlarged details of famous masterpieces or of his own sketches. Depending on the light conditions the structure of the canvas and the shiny oil color develop their own pattern, which breaks the depiction and transforms the painting into an object.

Li Gang was born 1986 in Dali in Yunnan Province in China and studied oil painting at Yunnan Dali Academy in Dali, China and art at the Department of Experimental Art of Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, China. More works from the series' exhibited in Lucerne will be shown at Palais de Tokyo in Paris from October 20, 2014 as part of the group exhibition *Inside China*.