

Li Dafang

“Throw-back – Jin Zhan’s Messy Growth, His Language and His Relatives”

Artist: Li Dafang

Opening: Saturday, 1 September 2012 – 4PM to 7PM

Exhibition: 1 September 2012 – 21 October 2012

Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing-Lucerne, Beijing:

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Galerie Urs Meile is pleased to announce the opening of Li Dafang’s solo exhibition of recent works, “Throw-back – Jin Zhan’s Messy Growth, His Language and His Relatives.”

Li Dafang’s endless experiments within his artistic practice in recent years have propelled him to make a breakthrough, reflected in the more than one dozen new paintings and mixed-media installations on view. The exhibition includes works spanning from Li Dafang’s most recent works on canvas, three-dimensional pictorial installations executed on canvas and wood, and examples of Li’s portraiture, as well as a scene accompanied by one of the written “subtitles” that hallmarked a large part of the artist’s earliest production during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

In Li Dafang’s view, in art there is little difference between progress and regression. The freedom in contemporary art is hypothetical, a “selfish” freedom that is fragile and vulnerable. Within today’s context, the artist is always overrated, yet the facts prove otherwise – creativity is relative, mediocrity is the original state. Beholding a humble attitude towards art, returning to an initial state in artistic practice—this is Li Dafang’s valuable intent.

Among many of Li Dafang’s works, his inseparable relationship with childhood memories and the environment where he grew up are found in the industrial areas and defunct factories seen in his images. Mesmerized by the old machinery housed in large factories and the defunct iron tools that for the artist represent a sense of absurdity and oppression, Li observes, “The beauty of the ruin dispersed through these factories and buildings of the past is what I appreciate until this day.” The figures among these images display strange poses and benumbed expressions, assigning a certain degree of narration and theatricality to his artworks, which even the audience might encounter with sense of confusion.

In his work *Hardware Store* (2012, oil on canvas, 140 x 230 cm), we can distinctively feel the danger and suspense imbued within the shop’s goods—each object is replete with stories that present viewers with an enigmatic sense of oppression. In *The No.7 Middle School* (2012, oil on canvas, painted wood, 454 x 647 x 6.5 cm, 4 parts in different sizes), a street scene is composed according to the artist’s memories of the surrounding landscapes of his middle school. In addition, the portraits in this exhibition are the artist’s depictions of those people most familiar to him, underlining the show’s title. It is the most ordinary state of those around him that the artist wishes to represent.

Li Dafang’s throwback is in fact a return to the artist’s most humble life and creative state. Using his artistic language to jot down the seemingly insignificant yet meaningful moments in life, the artist presents life in its most plain and natural state.

Li Dafang was born in 1971 in Shenyang, Liaoning Province. He currently lives and works in Beijing. His works have been exhibited extensively throughout the world. Recent group exhibitions have included “CAPITAL - Merchants in Venice and Amsterdam” at the Swiss National Museum in Zurich this year; “Face” at Minsheng Art Museum in Shanghai last year; the project “Zhang Hongbo” shown within the “Art Unlimited” section at Art 40 Basel in 2009; and “The State of Things. Brussels/Beijing” at BOZAR in Brussels, Belgium in 2009.