

Yan Xing

Standard Exhibition

Exhibition in Lucerne: 14.2.–12.4.2014

Opening: Friday, February 14, 6–8 pm

Galerie Urs Meile is pleased to present Yan Xing's first solo exhibition (*1986 in Chongqing, China; lives and works in Beijing and Los Angeles) in Lucerne. Known as one of the emerging artists on the Chinese contemporary art scene, Yan Xing creates multilayered works using different media such as video, photography, installation and performance. The exhibition will show two of his recent projects, which refer to a variety of sources from art, history, politics, and literature. The artist describes his practice as a "unique system of integration," which, at first glance, could be thought of as a practice of reconstructing and quoting. But Yan Xing sees himself as an artist in the avant-garde tradition, who understands art as a kind of game in which the players make their next move according to the rules and actions of their colleagues. So it is only natural that Yan Xing's works refer to, appropriate, and refine the work of other artists who blazed the trail for him. According to avant-garde custom, Yan Xing also writes short, highly articulate texts on his works. These comments tend to obscure rather than convey the work's individual point of origin. But this is really not what they were intended for. With these texts Yan Xing simply situates his work in the context in which he wants them to be regarded.

For *Arty, Super-Arty*¹ Yan Xing restaged seven of Edward Hopper's (1882–1967) famous paintings against a black background, even imitating their famous light contrasts. Unlike the original, he uses film and photography; his images are black and white; his characters are all male, and Yan Xing himself is in every picture. His reinterpretation of Hopper's famously melancholy works emphasizes the lack of communication between the protagonists. Somehow one always seems to be waiting for the other, looking at his vis-à-vis, who seems withdrawn and unaffected. Yan Xing's intention is to confront Hopper's artistic universe with his more realistic approach. It is as if he is trying out an old ritual on himself, as if he is conducting a kind of experiment to find out if the old rites are still of value to him. As a historical movement, Appropriation Art was mainly concerned with institutional critique, and Yan Xing is also walking in the shoes of his forbears, with the aim of providing insight into the rules and rituals of art itself.

A similar topic—namely "the core theme of contemporary art"—is also one of the subjects of the second exhibited project, *Two videos, three photographs, several related masterpieces, and American art* (2013). The videos, photographs, installation and marble sculpture extol acts of violence, sex, captivity, and enslavement, while combining modern and classic aesthetics. Wooden dildos, modeled after cultural relics, are presented on a shiny steel plinth next to two whips, a bowl, and a handkerchief. The series of photographs depicts two nude black males engaging in ancient sports, such as archery or javelin throwing; their poses are reminiscent of antique Greek statues and the overall staging was inspired by Robert Mapplethorpe (1946–1989). The same two models reappear in the video installation, playing flute to a caged bird, next to the Chinese character 寿, which means longevity. This character is also carved in a marble block reminiscent of a gravestone, and thus contradicts its meaning.

Despite the variety of different inspirations and allusions, the end result is recognizably Yan Xing, who gives his complex and complicated subtexts a sleek appearance. He combines the different media, connecting ancient Greek sculpture with American photography from the 1960s, American painting from the 1940s, Chinese superstition, queer topics, and theoretical commentary. It is Yan Xing's "unique system of integration" that turns all these seemingly unrelated interests and aesthetics into a harmonious composition.

1 2013, 3 film stills, photography (b/w), ultra giclee, 96 x 136 cm (framed), based on single channel HD video, b/w, silent, 9'16"

2 2013, video installation, 2-channel digital video (b/w, silent, loop), photographs, sculpture, installation

Yan Xing was born in Chongqing in 1986, and currently lives and works in Beijing, China, and Los Angeles, USA. He graduated from the Oil Painting Department of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in 2009. Yan Xing has won the *Chinese Contemporary Art Award (CCAA) – Best Young Artist Award* and also received a nomination for the *Future Generation Art Prize* from the Victor Pinchuk Foundation in 2012. His recent major exhibitions include: *Building Bridges – Zeitgenössische Kunst aus China*, Wolfsberg, Ermatingen, Switzerland (2013); *2012 Future Generation Art Prize*, Collateral Event of the 55th Venice Biennale, Palazzo Contarini Polignac, Venice, Italy (2013); *China China*, PinchukArtCentre, Kiev, Ukraine (2013); *ON / OFF: China's Young Artists in Concept and Practice*, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA), Beijing, China; *Yan Xing*, Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester, UK (2012); *Unfinished Country: New Video From China*, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH), Houston, USA (2012); *The III Moscow International Biennale for Young Art*, Central House of Artists (CHA), Moscow, Russia (2012); *The Seventh Shenzhen Sculpture Biennale*, OCT Contemporary Art Terminal (OCAT), Shenzhen, China (2012). His works are also in the Rubell Family Collection, Miami, USA; M+ Museum for Visual Culture, Hong Kong; the Yuz Foundation, Jakarta, Indonesia; and the Kadist Art Foundation, Paris, France.