



GALLERIA CONTINUA

SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING LES MOULINS HABANA

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QIU ZHIJIE

Racing Against Time

Opening: Saturday February 13th 2016, Via del Castello 11, 6pm-midnight
Until 30.04.2016, Monday-Saturday, 10am-1pm, 2-7pm

After the solo show at the Beijing gallery in 2013, Galleria Continua is pleased to present, for the first time in its San Gimignano space, a solo show by the Chinese artist Qiu Zhijie, entitled ***Racing against Time***. The project comprises a group of new works specially conceived for the occasion.

Qiu Zhijie is not just an internationally established artist but also a key point of reference on the Chinese art scene. His artistic practice embraces calligraphy, poetry, teaching, criticism and curating. Thinker, activist and cartographer, Qiu is a multi-faceted intellectual figure, and his work is articulated through an all-inclusive practice which in Chinese is called *Guangtong* art. The term encompasses various different meanings. It is the expression of individual freedom whilst respecting social responsibilities, it is the concurrence between rational analysis and impulse, it is the harmonic interaction between the different spheres of action in which we engage with. And finally it is the reciprocally advantageous fellowship between the explosive experience of making art and the experience of everyday living. "Art does not just concern the work produced, but also the more general

environment to which the work reacts; it is a complete practice," says the artist. It cannot but engage, then, with real life, society, politics and history, both that of our own age and that of the past.

Qiu's art is the representation of a new mode of communication between the Chinese literary tradition and contemporary art, social participation and the power of self-liberation given by art. In his work he uses different media, ranging from video to photography, performance to ink painting and installation. This mixture of languages function as a single whole: "I try to use all types of media, I believe that my ideal medium is the relationship established between all the objects," he explains.

Racing Against Time, the project conceived by the artist for the gallery's large ground-floor rooms, takes the form of an archaeological site: "It is like a palaeontological dig and a time machine of humanity. Looking back in time to the dinosaur kingdom, the bird kingdom and the mammal kingdom, the whole history of evolution is based on the survival of the fittest. The theme of this exhibition is the battle of powers and the war between empires. It dwells upon the dichotomy of these two logics", comments Qiu.

The show features a series of 'landscapes' entitled *Evolution*. Reflecting Qiu's typical style, they are realized using the centuries-old Chinese technique of padding with sponges: *"It is a very advanced traditional technique,"* explains the artist, *"usually employed to transpose onto paper inscriptions and graphic motifs depicted on ancient vases. All the studies about traditional Chinese inscriptions on stone, jade, bronze, etc. are based on this technique. The main difference between padding and a cast is that the former is able to transform the three-dimensional into the two-dimensional, in effect to transform the world into texts."* These paper reliefs, some scattered with fossils and fragments of artefacts, are a world that comes to the surface thanks to Qiu's archaeological sensibility.

The *Evolution* series develops chronologically, from Pangaea to the invention of agriculture and through to the "birth of God"; the images of the intricate skeletons of *Lover* and those of the legendary bird *Kunpeng* represent the final point of evolutionary history. *"Attestations of merit and heraldic symbols are forms of power; swords, armour and pistols are used to show off; gates and towers are both architectural forms of symbolism, an expression of perseverance: gates represent power and will, towers symbolize a reaching upwards; plants and animals are links between the history of evolution and the history of empires: birds and eagles, detritus of buildings, Duogong brackets, Roman columns, all shattered fragments and ruins of imperial formalism,"* explains Qiu.

Qiu Zhijie was born in Zhengzhou, in the province of Fujian, China, in 1969. He lives and works in Beijing and Hangzhou. After graduating in printmaking from the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts in 1992, he immediately became active on the contemporary art scene. He is a professor at the Academy of Chinese Art and at the Department of Experimental Art of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. His major solo exhibitions to date are: *The Grand Project*, Fujian Art Museum, Fuzhou (2015), *L'Unicorno e il Dragone*, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice (2013), *Blue Print*, WDW Art Centre, Rotterdam (2012), *Twilight of the Idols*, Haus of World Culture, Berlin (2009), *Breaking Through the Ice*, Ullens Contemporary Art Center, Beijing (2009), *A Suicidology of the Nanjing Yangzi River Bridge 1 – Ataraxic of Zhuang Zi*, Shanghai Zendai Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai (2008). The artist has contributed to many group shows, including: *Bentu, Chinese Artists in a Time of Turbulence and Transformation*, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; the 56th Venice Biennale (2015); the 31st São Paulo Biennial (2014); the Göteborg Biennial (2013); the 53rd Venice Biennale, Chinese Pavilion (2009); *The Real Things: Contemporary 6th Chinese Art*, Tate Liverpool (2007); the Gwangju Biennale (2006); the Yokohama Triennale (2005); and the 25th São Paulo Biennial (2002). As a writer, Qiu has published various texts on art, including: *The Image and Post Modernism* (2002), *Give Me a Mask* (2003), *The Limit of Freedom* (2003), *Photography after Photography* (2004) and *On Total Art* (2012). Qiu also curated the first video art exhibition in China in 1996, and, between 1999 and 2005, a series of exhibitions called Post-sense Sensibility, the purpose of which was to promote the work of young Chinese artists. In 2012 he was the curator of the 9th Shanghai Biennale, *Reactivation*.

For further information about the exhibition and for photographs:

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