

Press Release

A Solo Exhibition by Gao Lei

Projections 投射

Period | Thursday, July 12th – Sunday, August 19th, 2012

Venue | Arario Gallery Seoul cheongdam

Works | 22 pieces including installation, sculpture and photograph

Arario Gallery Seoul Cheongdam is pleased to present a solo exhibition by the leading Chinese contemporary artist Gao Lei (b. 1980), opening on July 12th, 2012. Gao Lei endlessly explores into worlds of binary elements such as core essence and appearance, fantasy and reality, and individual and authority, creating novel spaces through juxtaposing and deanthropomorphizing. Presenting a total of 22 works including large installation works measuring over 3 meters and paintings and photography, this is Gao Lei's first solo exhibition in Korea.

Born in 1980s, Gao Lei is of The Post-80s generation in China, whose members were born after the implementation of 1 child policy in 1980s. Unlike their parents' generation, The Post-80s generation were born under the market economy system, and brought up receiving the materialistic abundance and advantages of economic growth. Therefore, they are characterized as being individualistic, cost-driven, open-minded and reasonable. In general, Chinese contemporary art had the tendency to be large in scale, present bold colors and forms, and address political motifs. However, the art of The Post-80s generation casts a stark contrast with that of previous generations. Artists of The Post-80s use a much wider range of material, liberally working with installation art, media and painting in interdisciplinary style. Furthermore, they aren't hesitant to demonstrate works that are much more diverse, abstract, dreamy or personal, and to draw connections to Western culture and politics.

Among the artists from The Post-80s generation, Gao Lei is acclaimed for his highly philosophical and intense way of thinking which is reflected in his innovative works that transcend the limits of medium and genre. He crosses over the worlds of fantasy and reality with ease, by juxtaposing sculpture or installation in real space with its depiction in drawing or painting.

Work-in-progress since 2005, the photography series **Scene** and **Building** freely traverse between things that are virtual and things that exist in reality. The viewer stands in front of a square box with a hole in it, through which they view a photograph installed in the box. The photograph portrays bizarre situations that take place in a ruined room. An astronaut-like figure seems to have collapsed on the ground, or two large giraffes are striding in the room. The fantasy world the artist presents arouses a bizarre feeling and beckons the viewer into such space. However, the room in the photograph is an actual space in a building in China, which the artist himself has photographed. The photograph is revised and recreated into a space of virtual reality by the artist, creating the illusion as if it were a virtual world rather than actual world.

The recent works created in 2012 that are on display at Arario Gallery Seoul Cheongdam are much more exquisite, and higher quality in form and scale compared to the artist's previous works. Dealing with the subject of human life and death and the Buddhist idea of the eternal cycle of birth, death and rebirth, the recent body of work adopts a much more frank tone in its exploration of the relationship between individual and society.

T-3217 is an installation work featuring 4 swings suspended from an iron rack. Each of the swings takes the form of a female pelvis. Behind the swings are photographs of the head of a fetus with the same pelvis on its head. Since long time ago, swings have symbolized the desire for prosperity of descendents, and the female pelvis symbolizes the channel which gives life to a form. Through heredity and evolution, the human kind has strove to eliminate weak characteristics so that they are not passed down to next generations. Increased practice of caesarean section has contributed to the fact that pelvis has remained small, which has made natural birth more and more difficult. Thus risks in giving birth have increased, leading to the death of pregnant women in severe cases. Gao Lei states that this work confronts the circulating process of contradiction in which the human convenience of choosing something artificial rather than natural has given birth to dangers that have not existed in the past.

Meanwhile, **F-09151** presents a rubber cushion with a gas mask, and a hawk model which seems to peck at its food on the ground. This work references the custom of 'sky burial' which is often used by the Buddhists in Tibet and Mongolia. Based on the Buddhist faith in reincarnation, sky burial involves cutting up and leaving human corpse in a certain place for it to be eaten by birds and be reincarnated through them. In F-09151, the cushion that's filled with air symbolizes life, and the pecking hawk builds the tension, leaving the cushion ready to burst with pecking. By putting an iron cage around the hawk and the cushion, the artist provides a sense of safety for the viewer, from the volatile situation in which life and death can reverse at any moment.

Gao Lei leads his viewers to expanded awareness by creating new virtual reality based on social cultural situations of today. By introducing works by a young artist at the forefront of Chinese contemporary art scene, the intention of this exhibition is to present a refreshingly original form of Chinese contemporary art and its new direction.

About Artist

Gao Lei was born in Changsha, Hunan Province in China in 1980. He graduated from Digital Media Art in China Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2006. Gao Lei has participated in numerous group exhibitions in world-renowned museums and galleries including Museum Jean Tinguely Basel and Ludwig Museum. Gao Lei had solo exhibitions at Aya Gallery in Beijing in 2008, White Space in Beijing in 2011. This solo exhibition at Arario Gallery Seoul Cheongdam is Gao Lei's 3rd solo exhibition.

Images



T-3217_2012_c-print on paper_40x60cm



F-09151_2012_A rubber cushion and a gas mask, a hawk model_130x190x55cm



M-275_2012_Iron triangle top, iron cage, aluminum giraffe legs model, and chains_iron triangle top:
120x120x180cm, iron cage 120x70x60cm



A102_2009_Cibachrome transparency in fluorescent lightbox display case_30x30x40cm



A102_2009_Cibachrome transparency in fluorescent lightbox display case _30x30x45cm_detail



A102_2009_mixed media on canvas_180x240cm



Building No.35-A333#_2006_photography_150x180x3.5cm



Scene No.7_2008_ photography_30x30x45cm

[Image courtesy of the Artist and Arario gallery](#)

GAO LEI (b.1980)

Born and works in China

Education

- 2006 Digital Media Department of Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing
- 2001 Fine Arts School of Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing

Solo Exhibition

- 2011 Principle: Gao Lei, White Space, Beijing
- 2008 Objec[ts]pace—Photography Works by Gao Lei, aye gallery, Beijing



Group Exhibitions

- 2011 DAS ICH IM ANDEREN, Mercator Foundation, Essen
- DAYBREAK: Chinese Young Artist, Arario Gallery, Beijing
- 2010 ABSOLUTE DISTANCE, White Space (Organizer: UNDP) , Beijing
- WASABI — Exhibition of Young Contemporary Artist, Li Space, Beijing
- The Personal Dimension: Four Emerging Artists from China, ARARIO Gallery, New York, New York
- The Pavilion of Realism — International Contemporary Art, Other Gallery, Beijing
- BEIJING TIME.LA HORA DE CHINA—A panoramic vision of contemporary art in China, Casa Asia/SEEI/Matadero Madrid
- 2009 Future Together—Nomination Exhibition, ARARIO BEIJING Gallery, Beijing
- Chinetik, An exhibition of Tinguely Museum and IVAM (the Valencian Institute of Modern Art) in collaboration with Littmann Culture Projects, Basel, Valencia
- The Second Reality — Chinese Contemporary Art, National Art Museum of China; Meridian International Center, Washington DC
- 2008 China's ReVision — Chinese Contemporary Art, Ludwig Museum, Koblenz
- Whatever — Chinese Young Artists, I-MYU Projects, London
- The Evolution of Concept — the Past and the Future of Chinese Conceptual Photography, 798 Space, Beijing
- Accelerate: Chinese Contemporary Art, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore

- Butterfly Dream — Shanghai MoCA Envisage II, Shanghai Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai
- Hanging in Sky Drifting on Surface, Linda Gallery (Contemporary Art Center), Beijing
- 2007 Floating — Modern Chinese Art Exhibition in Commemoration between Korea and China, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Gwacheon
- 2006 Yokohama International New Media Art Festival, Yokohama
- Goodbye Reality — Exhibition of Experimental Visual Art, New Art Projects, Beijing
- 2005 The Line of Flight — Second International New Media Art Exhibition, China Millennium Monument, Beijing
- Ten Eras Ten Colors, SOKA Contemporary Space, Beijing
- New Beijing New Life, Central Academy of Fine Arts & Korea NABI Art Center, Beijing
- Project Sound and City, British Council China, Beijing
- 2003 Second Independent Visual Art of Youth, 22Film, Beijing,