

LUHRING AUGUSTINE BUSHWICK

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A Composite Leviathan

October 11 – December 21, 2019

Opening reception: Thursday, October 10, 2019, 6 – 8 p.m.

Luhring Augustine Bushwick is pleased to present *A Composite Leviathan*, an exhibition of new and recent work by twelve emerging artists from China. The diverse practices of these artists defy clear categorization, but are united through a shared investigation into the rapidly transforming landscape of contemporary culture, including the impact of emergent technologies, globalization, and urban sprawl. Organized in collaboration with James Elaine, the Beijing-based curator and artist, this robust exhibition will introduce the New York audience to a new generation of contemporary Chinese artists. Featured in the exhibition are works by He Wei, Jiu Jiu, Liu Dongxu, Liu Fujie, Nabuqi, Wu Di, Yang Jian, Zeng Hong, Zhang Miao, Zhang Ruyi, Zhang Xinjun, and Zhao Yang.

Jiu Jiu (b.1986, Lanzhou, Gansu Province) and **Zhang Xinjun** (b. 1983, Zhengzhou, Henan Province) create immersive video works and installations that reflect their reservations about advancements in technology and urbanization, examining the discomfort and isolation these forces create. Ranging in style from abstraction to figuration, **He Wei** (b. 1980, Ürümqi, Xinjiang Province), **Wu Di** (b. 1979, Beijing), **Zeng Hong** (b. 1974, Chengdu, Sichuan Province), **Zhang Miao** (b. 1985, Beijing), and **Zhao Yang** (b. 1970, Siping, Jilin Province) explore various painterly concerns, spanning from formal investigations to the expressive narrative potential of the medium. The sculptures and installations of **Nabuqi** (b. 1984, Ulanqab, Inner Mongolia), **Liu Dongxu** (b. 1983, Xi'an, Shanxi Province), **Liu Fujie** (b. 1983, Handan, He Bei Province), **Yang Jian** (b. 1987 Xiapu, Fujian Province), and **Zhang Ruyi** (b. 1985, Shanghai) draw on materials and objects from daily life, referencing their simultaneous strength and vulnerability in the face of a changing environment.

In Biblical terminology “Leviathan” is a dark creature of immense size, like that of an island rising out of the sea that cannot be subdued by mere man alone. It also can refer to anything of enormous proportions and formidable power, such as international corporations or totalitarian states and their vast bureaucracies. In Yang Jian’s sculpture, A Composite Leviathan, which inspired the exhibition’s title, we see a relic of an intimidating yet tottering state system composed of distinct elements sourced from disparate public spaces and monuments. It is a jigsaw puzzle of incongruous elements that don’t fit together quite right, but beautifully reveal the twisted metal structure within. I was reminded of Leonard Cohen’s lyrics: “There is a crack, a crack in everything / That’s how the light gets in.” The “cracks” in the sculpture’s armor are like the lines that have drawn this exhibition together. The focus of the show is not political, thematic, religious, or stylistic; rather it showcases a community of dispersed artists who are working in diverse methods, living in a conflicting system of flux and control, and drawing the “lines” that let the light in. – James Elaine

About James Elaine

Elaine’s career has focused on creating platforms for emerging artists. Prior to his 2012 founding of Telescope, a non-profit project space in Beijing that has given many Chinese artists their first exhibitions, he served as the Selection Shows Curator and Viewing Program Coordinator for the Drawing Center in New York and the Hammer Projects curator at the Hammer Museum UCLA, in Los Angeles. Elaine is the winner of the 2008 Ordway Prize for his lifetime curatorial work.

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The artists featured in ***A Composite Leviathan*** include:

- **He Wei** 何伟 (b. 1980, Ürümqi, Xinjiang Province) – Paint and process are the focus of He’s work. Utilizing brushes, sticks, rollers, scrapers, and watering cans, he applies thinned oil or acrylic paint to canvases on the floor, creating semi-random atmospheric abstractions. In this exhibition, He will present new work that incorporates hard edge geometric interventions into his abstractions in pulsating color combinations.
- **Jiu Jiu** 赳赳 (b.1986 Lanzhou, Gansu Province) – Jiu’s work examines image generation, the ethics of viewing, and the evolving technologies of our increasingly visual culture. He will present three video works in this exhibition: *Fantastic Grounds* (2016), *Go Better* (2015), and *The Year 2026* (2015), a three-channel video installation featuring clips from “Metropolis,” the 1927 science fiction film directed by Fritz Lang.
- **Liu Dongxu** 刘冬旭 (b. 1983, Xi’an, Shanxi Province) – Liu’s sculptures are spare and precise, referencing familiar and nondescript objects from daily life to reveal hidden meanings. *White Flower* (2018) examines the spiritual connection between iconic shapes from different cultures, by connecting Zhou Dynasty bronzeware, a flower incense burner, and the Western classical column.
- **Liu Fujie** 刘符洁 (b. 1983, Handan, He Bei Province) – To create her sculptures, Liu compiles accumulations of diverse materials. Linked with plaster, these objects convey fragility and strength; seemingly off-kilter, they reference the shape of the body. In this exhibition, Liu will also present one of her newest sculptures, *Jungle-Concealed Body* (2019), a sinewy large-scale bronze work.
- **Nabuqi** 娜布其 (b. 1984, Ulanqab, Inner Mongolia) – Nabuqi’s work focuses on the expanding urban realm, examining the vacancies it leaves behind and discomforts it creates. In *A View Beyond Space No. 5* (2015) a freestanding narrow, green-painted, stainless steel staircase conveys ascension, and yet leads to nowhere; its promise of escape is contradicted by a sense of absurdity. Nabuqi’s work is featured in the Arsenale presentation of the 2019 Venice Biennial.
- **Wu Di** 吴笛 (b. 1979, Beijing) – Made through a spontaneous process of addition and subtraction, Wu’s gestural paintings are characterized by a bold use of chiaroscuro. While she eschews any overt narrative, the paintings suggest old master depictions of subjects such as religious icons.
- **Yang Jian** 杨健 (b. 1967, Xiapu, Fujian Province) – Working across mediums including painting, video, sculpture, and installation, Yang explores power, polarity, and the absurdity of organized civilization. *A Black Square by Malevich and A Quasistationary Distribution Figure from the Essay Consensus Through the Influence of Committed Minorities* (2018) questions the hierarchical structures, including those intrinsic to the art world.
- **Zeng Hong** 曾宏 (b. 1974, Chengdu, Sichuan Province) – Zeng draws inspiration from artists of the past who have created their own aesthetic vocabularies in order to articulate the social and political concerns of their respective times. His sparse, elegant compositions recall written symbols, and are meditations on abstraction and line.
- **Zhang Miao** 张淼 (b. 1985, Beijing) – Zhang’s work fuses together elements of painting, sculpture, architecture, and design. He creates forms and compositions that hover between the familiar and the ambiguous, exploring the concepts of memory and comprehension.

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- **Zhang Ruyi** 张如怡 (b. 1985, Shanghai) – Zhang juxtaposes organic and architectural forms in order to address the forces of industrialization on the environment. A primary material in her recent sculptures and installations is concrete. She is compelled by the ubiquity of this medium as a building material – particularly in the context of China’s recent rapid development – as well as its physical properties: its composition from natural elements, and its ability to be shaped into any form.
- **Zhang Xinjun** 张新军 (b. 1983, Zhengzhou, Henan Province) – Zhang uses found and natural materials to create intricate installations that demand closer inspection. In *Coal* (2017), rough-hewn objects resembling rocks or shards are made from wood, which are screwed together and stained with many layers of India ink until they are a mysterious iridescent blue-black.
- **Zhao Yang** 赵洋 (b. 1970, Siping, Jilin Province) – Zhao’s work is influenced by his academic background in traditional Chinese painting, particularly one of its central tenets regarding the unpredictable flow of ink in water. Embracing this notion, his figurative paintings collapse any clear narrative structure, allowing for an unrestricted reading.