BIHCK DOTS

LU CHAO

Artist Statement

'Black Dots' is my sixth solo exhibition on 'black' after 'Black Forest', 'Black Mirror', 'Black Light', 'Black Box', and 'Black Silence'.

For me, 'Dots' is the most basic element that contributes to objective things. When I focus on a dot, the more I focus on it, the more I can find its particular difference. Maybe there are no two identical dots in the world, I hope to use these dots to describe the similarity, uniqueness, tininess and mystery of life, which has amazing energy. Every dot on the canvas is like the birth of a new 'life' in the universe, and its relationship to time and space makes me very curious.

Warm Black: Ciphers of Recollection, The Art of Lu Chao

Text by Jonathan Miles

through this temporal threshold and saturation that self-knowledge or self-certainty. issues out of the play of memory an imagination.

BLACK. For a moment imagine a black that has a relationship to both iconography and gestural economy: warm tone, a warm black. A midnight black that retains forests, churches, ruins, voids, solitude, dissolution, yet the memory of a sunrise, no matter how remote that there is no hint of "saving power" in Lu Chao's work. memory might be in actuality; so not quite a quality of In Friedrich's work the subject looks out in anticipation light, as much as a quality of anticipated warmth. Tone or expectancy, as opposed to staring into the abyss is a way of getting of things but outside of direct speech. stripped of all sense of agency, an always departing from, Warm black might for instance contain a memory trace rather than an arriving at, but anyway without a sign of of a Sung monochromatic painting and thus signify redemptive light. such a reference, but this is like a haze that spreads itself by memory.

The Grand Tours of the 18thC inaugurated an attempt to with occult powers. rediscover the lineage of European civilisation through the mediation on the fragmentary ruins of the Classical The elevation of the ruin within Romanticism was

We are passing through and over, being affected, or Ruins became in turn one of the main motifs of the disaffected by a time labelled as contemporary. So what Romantic imagination and in many ways stood as a passage might follow this, or what blink in time might symbol of the opposition to a version of modernity that find its composition here? What is certain is that it will insisted upon an alignment with technological progress have a quality born out of multiplication and differing as the main means of disclosing the future. The ruin velocities, a mixing and splicing machine being at the was also linked to the idea of the fragment within the root of hyper-valorisation processes that used to be called romantic schema. The Romantics had a suspicion of culture. Thus a new imaginary is surfacing, or attempting totality and in turn their theorisation process assumes to surface, but with a quality of density through which a fragmentary form, moving in some respects closer it is difficult to pass, thus no longer a constituent of a to the form of the work of art. Irony, as employed by definitive period. This implies a surfacing composed the Romantics serves to undermine final, positive ends out of saturations rather than serialised encounters within thought and instead gestures toward an infinite with distinct spacing. The monochromatic paintings of play of meaning through the suspension of completion. Lu Chao indicate this touching upon, passing over and Within this the self can never truly arrive at either full

Lu Chao shares with Casper David Friedrich a

across the very memory palace called tradition. Warm TONE. The 18thC also gave rise to 'The Claude Glass' black might instead signify a tenderness of the gesture which was a small black convex mirror that was utilised of painting in the face of the very striation that might be by artists to reflect a view and to create exceptional presented through the image. Thus chains are established tonal values. In many respects it also reflected disquiet that float across the surfaces that constitute the art about the mirror itself and the concept of mimesis so of painting: black - warm - trace - memory - image - instead manifested an attraction to the shadow realm striations - voids - aporias - discontinuities - encounters - signifying absence. In turn this gave rise to other ways of folds, all in a play of coupling and de-coupling before the formulating the relationship between vision, knowledge formation of something that yields to becoming subject and being. The black mirror could be understood not matter. In effect tonality is a circulation that establishes only as an instrument of disquiet but a pathway into the mood. Mood is the vapour that circulates with the realm of shadows that gave entrance to the underside structure of the image, like the equivalent of the breath of a reality principle founded on the clear light of day. resonance in Classical Chinese painting but transmuted What is seen in the mirror is not simply a reflection but a confrontation with a gaze that invites the viewer to be closer to death. This is why such mirrors were associated

world, coupled with the confrontation of the sublime. transformed by both Symbolism and Surrealism as the

towards a shadow realm that indicated the dissolution of strangeness, echo, allegory¹, wandering, beyond culture, and with it the diminished reality of the human representation, death, and blindness. These figures subject.

movement, Paul Eluard, his wife Gala and Max Ernst set out on a voyage to Indochina. Surrealism was marked IRREALITY. The black of Goya touches the limit by a strange contrast between the solitude of the mind experience of a demonic and abject darkness, the black and expeditions undertaken to shake the constitution of of Ad Reinhardt the entry point into the gaze of the the soul. The link between the sedentary and the mobile absolute based on the reducing powers of absence. If everything within the world of dreams. What was at issue of the perception of the gaze of memories of the yet not was not which kind of voyage but the actual possibility arrived. Aesthetically it is a form of uncanny in that of the voyage itself and with it the idea adopted from the presentation is what comes out of darkness and the Hegel of the journeying subject, forever in a state of alter side of solitude in the form of crowds, something restlessness. Expeditions, night time walks, voyages that should remain hidden but is now illuminated. all served to probe the very boundaries of waking and That is the secret code impressed into the warm black; dream life in order to open out the possibilities of the it stands for darkness moving into light and impressed imagination without fixed horizon. Ernst had been into the crowds, a solitude defined by the fear of crowds. a sense both of awe and terror within these ruins because then it is invested in the gaze of what returns. This points in which stone, flora and fauna merged and assume a dissolution. In contrast, when a monochromatic Sung relationship to new forms of fantastic otherness. Between painter such as Ma Yuan paints mist rising from the and Asiatic forests. Perhaps the ruins of Angkor Wat to reveal the origin of things in emptiness. This is in but also stood for a world that was about to be born, evoke in his monochromes that embodies the beyond a world of savagery and annihilation? In his paintings of representation in order to touch the absolute of this "Europe After the Rain" in the early years of the Second beyond. World War Ernst paints a world bereft of an active human subject, hence the sense of a post-human world. When entering an exhibition, spacing between work

that together with Chinese Classical painting creates a absence and the in-between. Tone then adds nuance to sublimity, abjection, dream-work dissolution, shadow, sustained as echoes or traces.

much darker afterlife of civilisation. The ruin pointed solitude, fascination, ruin, the Gothic, the fragment, form a labyrinth like figure, as opposed to a structure or a method; they can in turn, either form knots, be the In 1924, on the eve of the birth of the Surrealist source of eruptions or form irregular chains of becoming.

was the idea of the night, which contained within it the both Goya and Reinhardt gestures toward very different capacity to blur the exterior world in order to reassemble limits, the black of Lu Chao issues out from the disquiet introduced, by André Breton to the paintings of Gustave That is why the crowds themselves appear to be simply Moreau who had been inspired by illustrations of Khmer served up, as if their fate has already been determined ruins. Angkor Wat was vast in scale and had laid in ruin in advance of any subjective dimension that might be for centuries, buried amid jungle. There must have been apparent within the agency of being. If there is panic, no experience would have been comparable, a world towards a passage before extinction, a grim treadmill of 1926 and 1928 Ernst produced a total of ninety-two lake, the sense of dissolution is the effect of the putting forest paintings, which often mix elements of European aside of the dual register of subject and object in order stood for a mysterious life that could never be reinvented part, the irreality that Ad Reinhardt was attempting to

and work is being presented. Then within each work Romanticism, Symbolism, Surrealism and the abstract yet another form of space so this implies that there is a sublime form a mode of counter-rhythmical modernity play of within and without functioning as a weaving of visual syntax for the art of Lu Chao. The primary figures this, but this is a-signifying and as such this constitutes for this are the night, blackness, darkness, emptiness, the underside of painting that is closer to networks

CARE. Tiny figures scuttle this way or that as if pulled by magnetic forces, masks stir blankly into space from columns or from tree trunks, in place because they signify the passage from one realm into the next, ink is thrown², splashed by gravity and velocity, forces of nature are released and human bodies are thrown by experiment or elemental forces, as if biosphere and techno-sphere have become one in announcing the staging of extinction. What remains in all of this, other than the care to paint and record in fascination? Rather than recording indifference to the spectacle, these are works that trace the possibilities that dwell on the underside of the image. With so much out of place, the paintings themselves exhibit themselves as a place in which the image, sense and temporality are in free play rather than the possibility of free fall.

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¹ Walter Benjamin said that history was to ruin, what allegory was to thought. For him allegory was a form of actuality that made, in the words of Susan Buck-Morss, "visibly palpable the experience of a world in fragments."

² Thrown or splashed ink has a long lineage in the Chinese Classical tradition but it is exemplified in the work of Liang Kai, and the Japanese painter Sesshu. Also it has an interesting connection to the work of Alexander Cozens (18thC) who developed a style referred to as 'blot' paintings.

Lu Chao – Paint it black

Text by James Putnam

that all have black in the title and his fascination with dense black spheres but instead of grains of sand, this colour originated in 2011 after discovering a book hundreds of tiny figures are falling through the centre on Chinese landscape paintings of the Song and Yuan of the glass as if alluding to time and space. The scenes Dynasty where the artists used just black ink. They he depicts are neither set in the past or future but blended it with different amounts of water, to create dwell in an eternal present where time and space seem separate shades, which they regarded as 'colours'. intertwined. He identifies himself with the miniature Henceforth Lu Chao chose to limit his palette to black people and expresses his thoughts and emotions through paint utilising the white showing through from the their individual body language, which he also wants primed canvas. Black is the densest, darkest colour that the viewer to relate to. These works seem to express by artists in prehistoric cave paintings. Lu Chao uses around us and beyond our comprehension, making us ivory black paint that is made from charred animal bones reflect on our own existence. 'Circulation', a somewhat mixed with oil. After having a basic idea, his working apocalyptic scene, shows an ominous tornado against process usually involves doing a small preparatory sketch a dark and stormy sky and its rotating column of air before having a more spontaneous approach to the work contains a sea of caricatured faces. These are portraits of with some areas sensitively rendered in exquisite detail. real but anonymous people, random strangers that he His very precise yet expressive brushwork is executed has observed or accidentally met somewhere and their in black strokes and dots, with any accidental marks features have become embedded in his memory. This enthusiastically incorporated into the overall rhythm of myriad of faces also appears in his other works, around the final painting.

of aerial perspective, as if we the viewer are looking in Barcelona. down on them from above, perceiving the vulnerability some natural disaster.

'Black Dots' is the sixth in Lu Chao's series of exhibitions 'Free Fall' depicts a giant hourglass containing two absorbs all light and it is also one of the first colours used the presence of a bigger, superior energy that is all the columns of ruined temples or they peer inquisitively out from a wall in his painting 'Life Collection No.3', a The large scale works in his current series have a sense composition inspired by a view of the Picasso Museum

of the miniature people compared to the vastness of the Lu Chao feels a compulsion to depict these scenes panorama or grand architecture. He plays with scale and that are somewhere between hallucination and reality, uses dramatic viewpoints to make the buildings look imagined memories that have no logic, like the uncanny larger and more imposing in relation to the tiny figures. realms of the unconscious explored by the Surrealists. This is illustrated most effectively in 'Black Light No.6', When we view these paintings with their awe-inspiring that shows the lofty interior of a Portuguese medieval views, enhanced with a dramatic sense of lighting, we're cathedral and he skilfully captures the warm glow of transported to a fantastical world that can lead us to sunlight through the circular window, adding a 'spiritual' contemplation and self-reflection. He does not seek a intensity to the composition. In the painting 'Black Dots', specific response from the viewer but instead a marriage the minuscule figures are massed around the spectacle of imagination. 'Laboratory No.6' is one of two small of an enormous crater. Perhaps this vast abyss represents paintings where he deviates from his exclusive use of the negative space from which the energy of the universe black and paints in blue instead. This shows an antique came into being. In 'Dancing under the Sunlight No.2', retort stand with two glass vessels and is confidently the narrative is equally ambiguous, within the crater painted to capture the play of light on the glass and its countless tiny figures are running around with their intriguing contents. At first glance this subject matter arms raised either in joyous adoration of the daylight or may seem unremarkable but on closer inspection we can alternatively they are panicking helplessly in the face of better appreciate its mystique and the complex mixture of feelings it arouses. Lu Chao has a penchant for depicting

glass for its sense of fragility and its unique material state being somewhere between solid and liquid.

Art is a means of giving free rein to Lu Chao's fertile imagination, which would have been suppressed during the era of the Cultural Revolution. Although born in Beijing, he was educated in the Western art tradition there and subsequently studied in London where he currently lives, so his work is not confined to the Chinese contemporary cultural context. Nevertheless, he does take much inspiration from historical Chinese landscape paintings with their subtle interplay of light and shade and synthesizes some of these qualities into his own practise. Although his characteristic depiction of crowds of tiny people has something to do with growing up in densely populated urban China, it may also have underlying psychological associations with fear of encroachment on personal space or the loss of individual identity. His miniature people also remind us how small and insignificant human beings are compared to the vastness of the macrocosm. His work does not require wordy analysis or explanation, it's more important that the viewer can enjoy its enigmatic and ambiguous qualities that offer multiple interpretations. Lu Chao's predilection for black may also relate to its association with mystery and the unknown, and his work prompts reflection on the big unknowns like the origin of matter, energy and the extent of the universe. As he puts it: "The reason why I like black is that for me everything is born from it and dies in it".

> James Putnam, Senior Research Fellow LCF, University of the Arts, London

Interview

Text by Olivia Sand

A devoted young painter, Lu Chao (b. 1988 in China) has from people I happen to meet every day, be this in powerful works with striking witty titles, Lu Chao seems strangers to me. eager to challenge the boundaries of the medium in order What strikes me most is how unique all these individuals and the talent to pursue that undertaking.

with the Asian Art Newspaper.

called "Black Light". What inspired that specific title?

view of Chinese society. The second one was entitled story behind every face. "Black Mirror", a self-portrait through Chinese society. "Black Light" was exploring the mystery of the universe AAN: Do you make sketches while on the street? surrounding me, hoping to understand it better.

AAN: The human presence is central in your work. How interesting. do you view the masses you depict and what do the masses mean to you?

LC: Through the masses, I represent myself as I used to vour paintings, like friends or relatives? depict everyone as if it were myself.

AAN: How about for the people who have faces?

people I see next to me.

images drawn from the media?

gather images from the internet, from newspapers, from magazines, and I also look for faces within crowds. In AAN: Even if you get to talk to these people, are the faces short, I collect material everywhere and from different matching the stories you imagined? sources.

AAN: What is critical in your selection of a person?

LC: The face is most important. The faces (the ones AAN: Are you yourself featured in any of the paintings? around the tree in my paintings for example) come LC: I am featured in very few paintings. However, in all

developed an accomplished personal language. Painting the underground or on the streets and I always try to primarily in black and white, his pieces feature landscapes imagine their life. I believe every face has a story behind and people in an utterly realistic manner with a keen sense it. When I am in my studio, I am trying to paint from of observation, analysis and questioning. Matching his memory the people I met even though they are complete

to take it further. Presently, he seems to have the mindset are. Some people's faces are normal, and some people's faces can tell endless stories. You literally feel that In the interview below, Lu Chao discusses his trajectory this person must have a very tough life or on the contrary, lead a very peaceful life. Maybe what I feel is completely wrong, but this is how I perceive these Asian Art Newspaper: Your latest exhibition in Paris was people. In addition, how you connect with strangers is very personal, especially if you only pass them for Lu Chao: "Black Light" was my third solo show and so approximately five seconds on the street. Maybe, these far, all three exhibitions I had can be seen as a sequence. five seconds will represent the only moment in our entire The first one was called "Black Forest" presenting my life when we connect. From there, I try to imagine the

LC: I used to, but I don't anymore. Now, I try to draw directly from memory which I find much more

AAN: On occasions, have you included people you knew in

be one of them. Many people ask me what my view of the LC: Yes, in my older work, I have included friends or masses is and whether I look down on them like a god. famous people. In 2012, I created an installation called That is not the case as I remain part of them. I basically "Sunflower" which featured many famous people. In that specific piece, I only ended up painting people I knew. Presently, I prefer to paint people I don't know. Artistically, it was an excellent decision as I noticed that LC: As I used to be within these crowds of people, the by painting people I didn't know, I completed my strokes individuals I paint with precise features are simply the with more freedom without having to be scared that the faces I drew didn't match the real faces of the people I knew. Therefore, when I paint from memory, friends AAN: Do you work from your own photographs or from would sometimes recognize certain features, but this is a pure accident. The focus is on the human side with every LC: I take my own pictures, but I also collect them. I face being the result of a coincidence and being random.

LC: At the end of the day, the stories are always different from what I had imagined.

draw.

language?

is hard to say, but perhaps I simply connected to them wrong. through my cultural heritage.

started to look at China's ancient culture, but before that, individual? Of course, the standard of living is better and all culture came from the West. No one was actually perhaps not as happy as they seem. featured huge mountains with tiny people.

Although today there is a certain interest in front of the station. Dissatisfaction is the rule. contemporary ink painting, I try to stay away from it because I don't think traditional Chinese art or the new AAN: You study these people that build the "masses" with ink painting can represent the future of Chinese art. great care. Is there a way out of the masses? Clearly, both of them are important, but in the future, LC: It is very hard. Once you are in the Chinese society, and I let my work grow very naturally. I believe that nervous. approach will create something new in the future.

AAN: As for the people you depict, observing them closely LC: I think one needs time. If we look at these people - especially their facial expression - they seem to carry all from a Western perspective, it seems there is no hope. the weight of this world on their shoulders.

called "Monument" is like being in a museum with hope. To them, this is the right thing and this is hope.

the paintings I imagine that I stand for the tiny people a work under a glass case. It reflects China today: which is a reaction to how I react to all their stories, I basically everyone is looking at China as the country guess that is the way I communicate with the people I that has developed so quickly. It may look shiny, but when observing the details, it is quite disorganized. As a "monument", it feels strong, but it is actually a cake **AAN:** How did you get to paint so many tiny people and which is very soft and fragile with every layer connecting with such precision and detail? How did you develop that through the glasses standing as pillars. Consequently, there is a kind of dangerous feeling inside. I am an artist LC: At school back in China, I studied Western oil who doesn't like to play with political ideas. I am not painting for ten years. Then, during the second year at Ai Weiwei. I just try to tell the truth and say what I feel. university, I started to look at traditional Chinese ink Certain things are negative while others are positive. It painting from the Song and from the Yuan dynasty and I is a complex situation, exactly the way China is today fell in love with it. Why I fell in love with these paintings where it is difficult to determine what is right or what is

As you know during the Cultural Revolution, culture in AAN: Do you view the piece "Monument" as standing for its broadest sense stopped. Most recently, people have the situation of the entire country or just for the single especially in the new China from 1949 through 1990, there are some millionaires, but looking closer, people are

appreciating our own history. Being interested in ancient LC: Exactly. That is why I am saying it seems very traditional ink paintings, I started to copy them, studying organized, but when you kook at the details, it is actually them up-close. I think that was helpful developing my very chaotic. People are screaming at each other, carrying language on two levels: with ink painting, it is just black very heavy bags. These are the people I am taking and white and in addition, there are some small people pictures of in the Chinese train stations. They come from inside the painting. In ancient Chinese philosophy, small cities to work in Beijing, and every year, they are people believed in nature and the composition always trying to go back to their hometown. It is very hard to get a train ticket, creating long lines with huge crowds in

we must create something new. We cannot always use you can't really get out. As an example, people who our great-grandfathers' works to represent Chinese art. are working wake up every morning feeling they owe Similarly, we can't use Western art, copy it and say this is somebody some money. Therefore, they have to go to Chinese art. In my opinion, both approaches are wrong. work and this is the circle. Everybody is in the circle and In my practice, I don't have a very clear rule saying I want I used to be in it too: you need to pay the rent and earn to copy or continue China's tradition. I look at everything a living. The atmosphere is tense and everybody is very

AAN: There seems to be no hope then...

However, if you live in China and everybody else around LC: For example, the piece with the cake under glass you is behaving that way, it doesn't feel as if there was no

AAN: In that sense, what we see from the people you unique whoever that person may be. It is not just the fact depict is just an attitude they keep for their daily life?

LC: Yes, I think so. Maybe, all these people are not happy, but if everybody does the same, they don't have different AAN: Basically, does everyone depend upon destiny or opinions. I nevertheless believe it will get better.

the world, would you tend to say that the masses have a is a painting entitled "Trying to draw two same faces.". certain power?

Without them, China would not have developed that fast. probably one of the worst students at school, but I really I have a painting called "Stage" (2014) which alludes to wanted to be unique. I got many punishments by wearing that situation with everybody talking about China and my hair like that, but now when I look back, I am happy how fast it developed, how it can finish the construction I did it because that is something I did with the goal of of certain projects within one or two years, but no one being unique within this overwhelming Chinese society. really cares about the lower level of the population. In Today, the problem in China is that everybody is afraid the work "Stage", all the crowds I painted are Chinese to be different with the result that they all try to be the workers and I put the spotlight on them. I think people same. tend to forget what the real stage is and who the real players on the stage are. People are just looking at the AAN: Being the same is what you are taught growing up shiny high developed China although the main players and although one would like to be different, it is difficult. are the workers, but they don't really have any saying. I LC: Yes. Everyone looks the same, but at the same time am not creating political works expressing clear political everyone is so different. You can't find two faces that are views. On the contrary, I respect that everyone has the same although I tried my best to paint the same face different opinions and therefore, I try to create works twice in "Trying to paint two faces.", but at the end of the that are open-ended so everyone can finish them by day, there are no two same faces. themselves.

AAN: The people in your paintings are mainly the crowd like? forgotten ones of the economical development?

LC: Yes. All the pieces I paint about Chinese society are naughty. My home was actually quite far from the city about the lower class of people. The other series with center. Therefore, I attended a local school and my the tiny people takes another angle: it is about my life teacher didn't like me. She was aware I was painting and representing a diary of my everyday life.

AAN: Do you keep an actual diary?

write.

did you learn from them?

LC: I learned to see people through their attitude. Just by looking at them, nobody stands out and they are almost AAN: You are now living in London. Do you keep some the same. However, by looking closely I realized how ties with China? How is the experience different? every person is different: maybe they have family, maybe LC: Presently, I am trying to live in London as well as in they have another story within their family. Studying China because I want to continue to paint China. I think people so carefully, I am trying my best to respect every the angle from which I paint China is very important life because each and every one of them is important. I whether physically from inside of China or from outside am very aware of that because I used to be and I still am of the country. Being in China, I can see everything

of being a star or a celebrity that makes a life unique.

does every single individual still have the possibility to break out of the mold?

AAN: With China's population being one of the largest in LC: I really believe one can break out of the mold. There The hairstyle I am wearing is from when I was in primary LC: Yes, they are the ones who actually built China. school. When I was around ten, I was terribly naughty,

AAN: As a child, what was your experience of being in the

LC: When I was a child of seven or eight, I was very one day, she told me that although I knew how to draw, if I didn't study, I would have no future. That really hurt me. My mother then transferred me to a school located LC: My painting is my diary. Sometimes I also sketch or in the center of the city. In order to get to school, I had to take a bus every day for several years. I remember very accurately how I felt being in the crowd, without being AAN: Observing and studying the people you paint, what able to get on or off the bus. I think my clear memories of being in the crowd go back to that time.

one of these individuals in the crowd. Every single life is clearly. Also, I don't lose the feeling of being Chinese

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which is very important for me.

individual's life.

AAN: This is a subject of discussion that comes back on a AAN: Do you nevertheless still complete some drawings? regular basis in the West, but for countries with such large LC: Yes, I do, but not too many. crowds, is there a specific political system best associated with it?

can be applied to China because the country is extremely interested in the landscape after focusing so much on big. In addition, throughout history, China has always crowds of people although recently, you started mixing needed a strong government to control everything. I both? answer.

AAN: You are presently living between China and London. Do you divide the year in two?

LC: I do half and half. Besides my studio in London, I aspect of living nature? can work in a friend's studio near the 798 art district in LC: Yes.

AAN: Were the pictures in China mainly taken in Beijing face, can you be more specific? or did you also travel to other cities?

to other cities as well. In the future, I would also like to the middle of the room which was something they did go to regions like Xinjiang or Tibet.

are quite witty.

LC: I don't know. They just happen in my mind.

AAN: Do you complete any sketches before starting the AAN: Indirectly, nature provides a certain guidance? actual painting?

since I have been in London I don't. Presently, I try to represents a kind of religion. People believe in something

complete every painting as a sketch and I think that is Living in London is something I enjoy a lot. Upon my the best way to express life. In my practice, the process arrival, it was strange because I was looking for some is the following: the first image happens in my mind. crowds to paint, but there weren't any! The carnival Even though I may paint a very large work, I don't do any in Notting Hill is probably the most crowded place I sketches. Consequently, the original work is the sketch found in London. I started to draw people from the which gives the piece more spontaneity. Once the sketch carnival which was a different perspective from what I is completed, the work is finished. Compared to that, am doing today. From then on, I started to focus on each painting after a preliminary sketch becomes an extremely boring undertaking.

AAN: You seem to be very much at ease painting LC: I don't think a system as it exists in smaller countries landscapes and crowds of people. How did you get

cannot even imagine that a democracy could work in LC: To me, the landscape stands for a larger face. When China. However, that doesn't mean that certain things I look at a tree, I can imagine a lot of faces on the tree in should not be the subject of change and that adjustments the shape of the branch for example. It is very mysterious. should not be made. For China, this is a very complicated Also, the tree represents something beyond faces as can question and time will provide some answers. People be seen in my "Black Light" paintings. I like to relate to often have a hard time describing the course China a Chinese writer who said when referring to that kind of should take: indeed, a lot of people are complaining tree that he was looking at thousands of faces on the tree. about Chinese society. Complaints are one thing, but if I find this approach very interesting: I look at so many you ask these people what exactly they would do since faces and so many faces look at me or seen on a larger they disagree with the system, they cannot provide any scale, something we don't know is looking at us. I like this relationship where there are many layers like in this case to look and to be looked at.

AAN: So the faces are not people's faces, but another

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AAN: When you say the tree as a whole is like another

LC: Chinese people believe in nature. During the Song LC: I went to all the train stations in Beijing and travelled and the Yuan dynasty, people used to put a stone in according to their native religion. Today, we still believe in nature and we follow nature. Nature is never wrong. AAN: How do you come across your titles as some of them That's why I am painting a lot of trees: it is mysterious, something we are following, but we don't know its exact

LC: Absolutely. You can see so many trees in the Song LC: While I was still living in China, I did sketches, but and the Yuan dynasty paintings! That is because nature

they don't know, respecting a "higher power", something material, I can't make the idea very deep. However, which is beyond us. That is what counts.

AAN: How did you get to select that specific type of tree?

LC: I choose the trees in "penjing". It is a small miniature by just painting in black and white. tree, like a flower plate, although it seems oversized in my paintings. It is one or two hundred years old and AAN: For the detailed small people, there almost seems to at the same time something natural, but also controlled that language by yourself? and influenced by humans. I would tend to say that LC: When I was in high school, I drew a lot of figures approximately 80% of the trees I draw are from "penjing". which was certainly very helpful towards what I am

paint it out of your imagination?

LC: I follow the model of the tree based on photographs.

Why is that?

the tree, but the painting ended up looking too chaotic. Therefore, I put the faces on the ground in order to achieve a proper composition.

AAN: There are very few paintings where besides black LC: Clearly Rembrandt and he is still my favorite painter. and white you are using color. What is your approach to I simply love his work. I like how brave and how very color?

solo show, I try to include one color painting. There is period. I find his portraits are connected to the universe no specific reason for that except that I feel it is more and he was very determined. He painted many selfinteresting that way. For the first exhibition, I included portraits and he understood life. Perhaps towards the a pink painting, for the second one, I included a blue end of his life he had an approach which was close to the painting and for the last exhibition, I had a yellow lemon one of the Song and Yuan dynasty painters. They were on

AAA: Why do you paint specifically in black and white?

dynasty which is a period I truly enjoy. Also, when I work work. It has nothing to do with painting portraits for rich in black and white, I experience the feeling that I am people. writing more than I am painting, I like to use painting as In addition to Rembrandt, I also like Francis Bacon, a diary. Drawing in black and white is the best way for Lucian Freud and many others. me to feel the immediacy with what I am thinking. It is like writing a diary whereas when using color, it is a very AAN: Among the contemporary artists from China, did different process.

AAN: In what sense is it different?

LC: You need to think about the color and reflect upon as a philosophy, but rather that art is about real and basic which color is best. For me, it is nice, but it is also life which is what his paintings are about. From him, I challenging. If I build some complications within the learned that the strongest feeling is the authentic and

that cannot be explained. I don't think it is necessary once I use very simple material, the story becomes very to define what the power is. It is something we can feel important in the work and people will look at the idea behind the work. I deliberately don't hand out too much information in the work. In my opinion, the process presently works exactly because I can focus on the idea

people keep cutting it in order to change its shape. It is be a relationship to miniature painting. Did you develop

AAN: Do you follow a proper model of the tree or do you I started to draw when I was four. Recently, I asked my mother why she took me to study painting because all members of our family were working in an army factory, and no-one was involved with painting. My mother AAN: The faces are always on the ground, next to the tree. answered because it was cheap, the equivalent of 50 pence a month. She also wanted to take me to study the LC: Initially, it was my intention to put some faces on piano, but that was too expensive, and she couldn't afford it. So I remained set on painting.

AAN: You mentioned you studied Western painters. Were there any Western painters who had a strong impact?

unique he was. I have a special appreciation for him LC: I always paint in black and white, but for each compared to the other portrait painters of the same the fringe of society and didn't work for money. On the contrary, they painted what they liked, turning painting almost into a religion. To me, the shape and the color of LC: I think that is in reference to the Song and Yuan Rembrandt's faces show that there was a belief behind the

any of them have a specific impact?

LC: One artist who had a great impact is Liu Xiaodong. I love his work and his attitude. He does not believe in art honest feeling you experience about everyday life. He LC: I wish they would become more abstract and was my tutor at university in Beijing and I subsequently therefore more spontaneous, I would enjoy moving studied with him for three years in his studio. As he was towards abstraction because so far, I have always painted preparing a show in London, I also worked with him for reality. When painting something abstract, the feeling of a month as his assistant. He is a wonderful person.

AAN: Do you feel drawn to Surrealism?

LC: My work is surreal, but it all comes from something you remain faithful to black and white? real. Everything is surreal, but put together, it is real.

to the art world. What is your view of the art world?

people - collectors, dealers, etc. - between the powerful similar way have done before me. and the less important.

AAN: Where do you see yourself in that system? **LC**: Still among the tiny people.

AAN: What are the main challenges for you in your work?

LC: Sometimes while working, I care too much about me, it is simply an installation within the painting. how the painting will ultimately look like. Perhaps if I didn't care about how the painting turned out, some AAN: You completed a first art curriculum at university interesting developments would take place. Ideally, in Beijing. What did the second one in London bring one should not plan too much because there is always artistically? something new that can emerge from the work. Basically, LC: In Beijing, I learned the skill of painting, covering "accidents" are a gift for a painter!

mean to you?

LC: Art is life. Sometimes, I am telling my friends I Consequently, I experimented a lot. am not an artist, but just a painter. I simply paint my At this stage, I need the freedom to use everything everyday life and what I feel. If I paint what I feel without I know, but do it better than previous artists. Also, I treating myself as an artist, then it can touch people am getting tired of people complaining about China's because what I feel, other humans will feel it too. I am education system being useless because it follows the communicating with the audience through my paintings Western approach and one draws a lot in the studio. instead of communicating through language.

shown in Beijing. How did people in Beijing respond to experiences, but if you use them intelligently in your them as opposed to people in Europe?

LC: It was different. In Paris, everyone kept saying these paintings were referring to China. As I was showing the pieces in Beijing, people realized they were about themselves. People in Beijing understood what I meant because everyone has the same life which is the one I depict in my paintings.

AAN: Would you envision that over the years your paintings could become more abstract?

mystery I experience is very unique.

AAN: If you were to paint in a more abstract way, would

LC: Yes. I think in a few years, I will develop an abstract language, but still in black and white. There are so many AAN: You have completed a few paintings with reference artists in the world, and so many things have already been done that the only way I can create something LC: The art world is similar to a game with a hierarchy of unique is to develop further what artists working in a

AAN: You have also been working in installation. Would you nevertheless further continue to focus on painting?

LC: I prefer to focus on painting because I find the medium the most interesting of all. On a simple canvas, you can create another world which I find fascinating. To

the entire range from Western oil painting to Chinese ink painting. In London, I learned how to use that skill. AAN: In your case, what should art be and what does art I don't think the Professors in London taught me how to paint, but I was allowed to do whatever I wanted.

In my opinion, nothing is useless for an artist. Every experience will influence your work, one just needs to AAN: Your paintings depicting the local crowds have been take it in a positive way. Of course, there may be bad work, you can differentiate yourself from other artists.

> Olivia Sand The Asian Art Newspaper The article was published in the book "Contemporary Voices: From the Asian and Islamic Art Words".





Detail





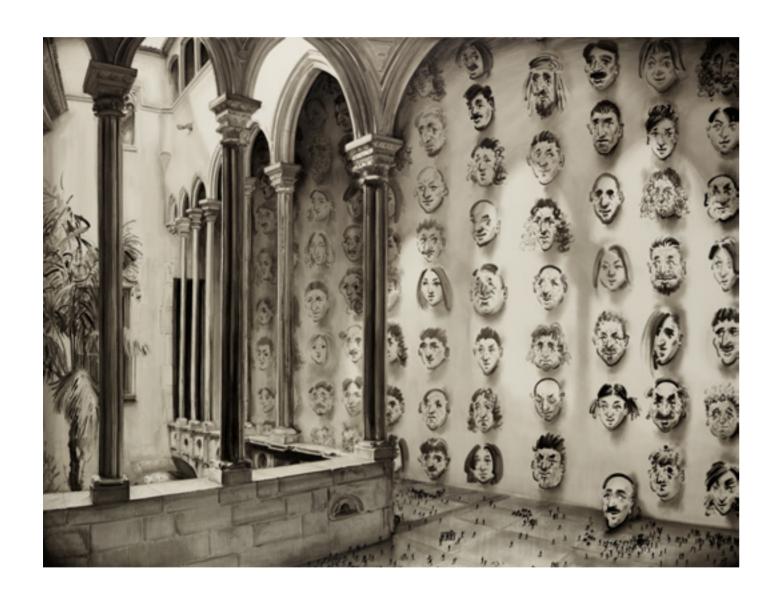


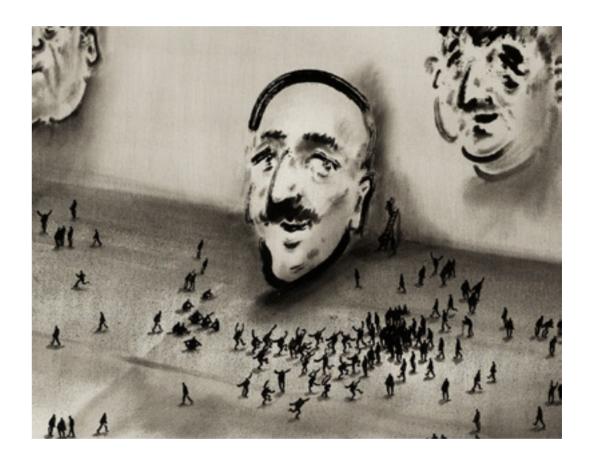






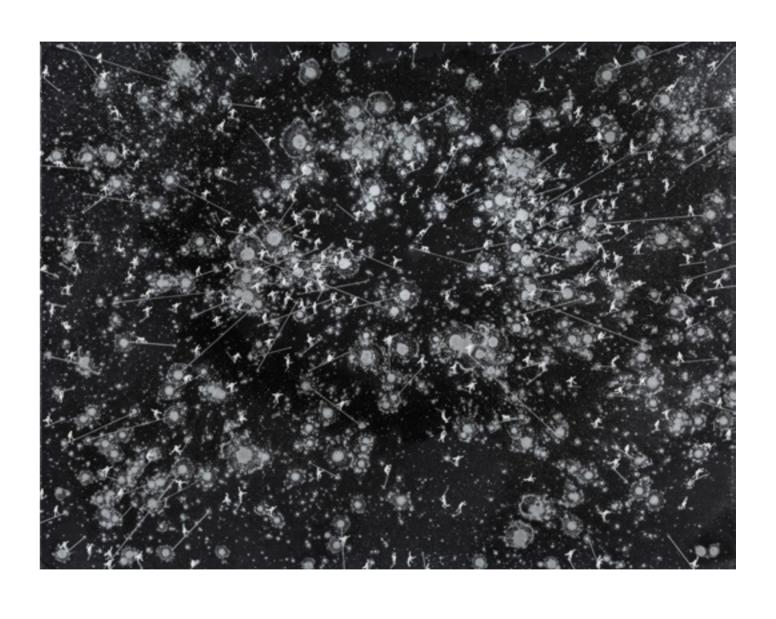


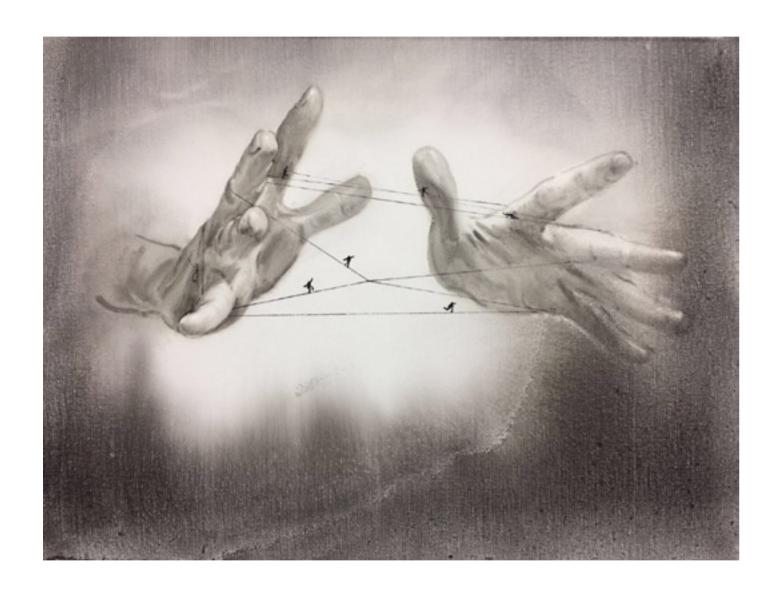


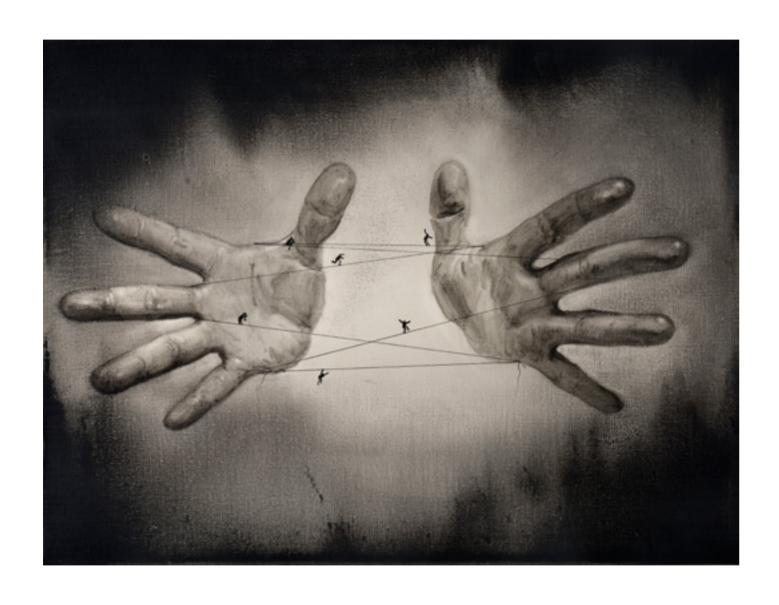


Detail

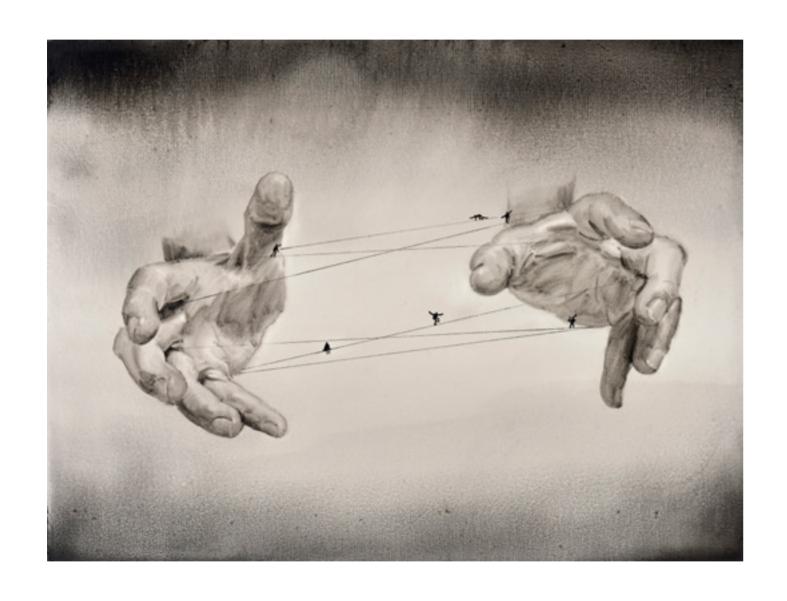




















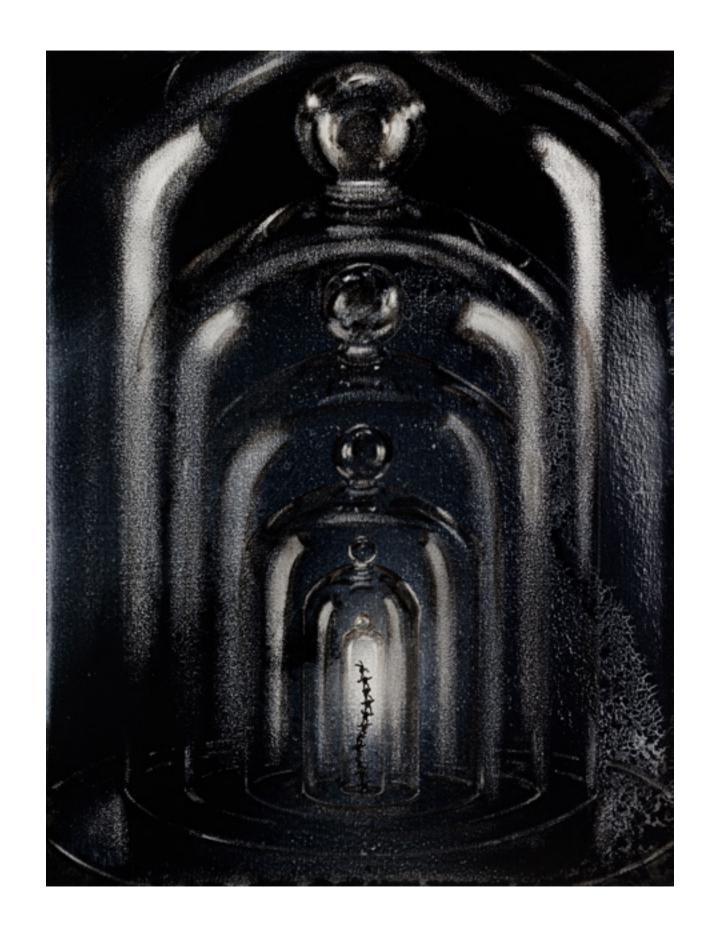


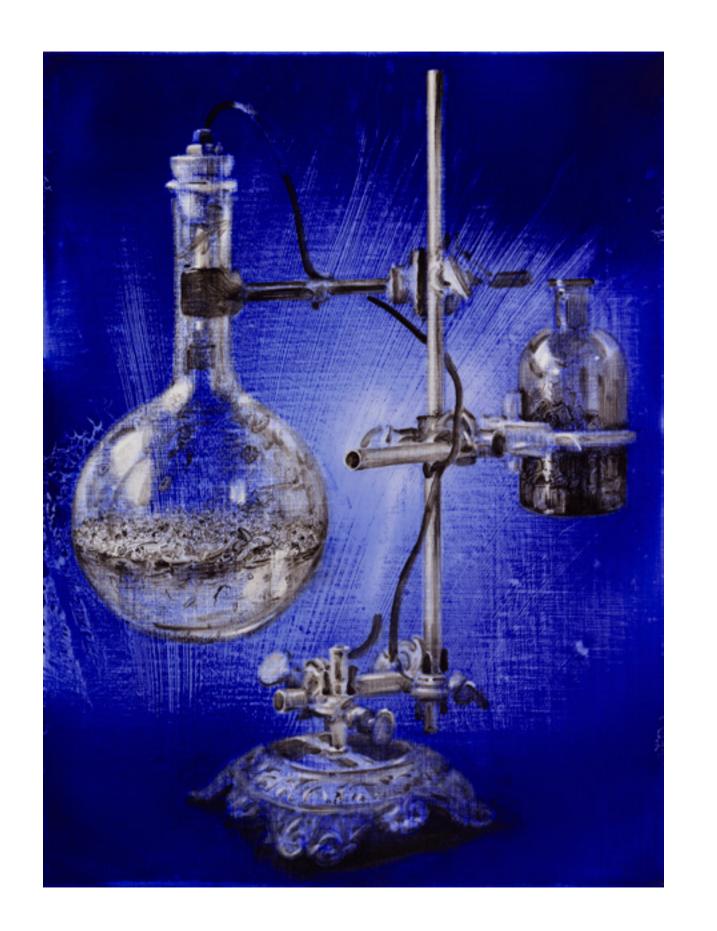


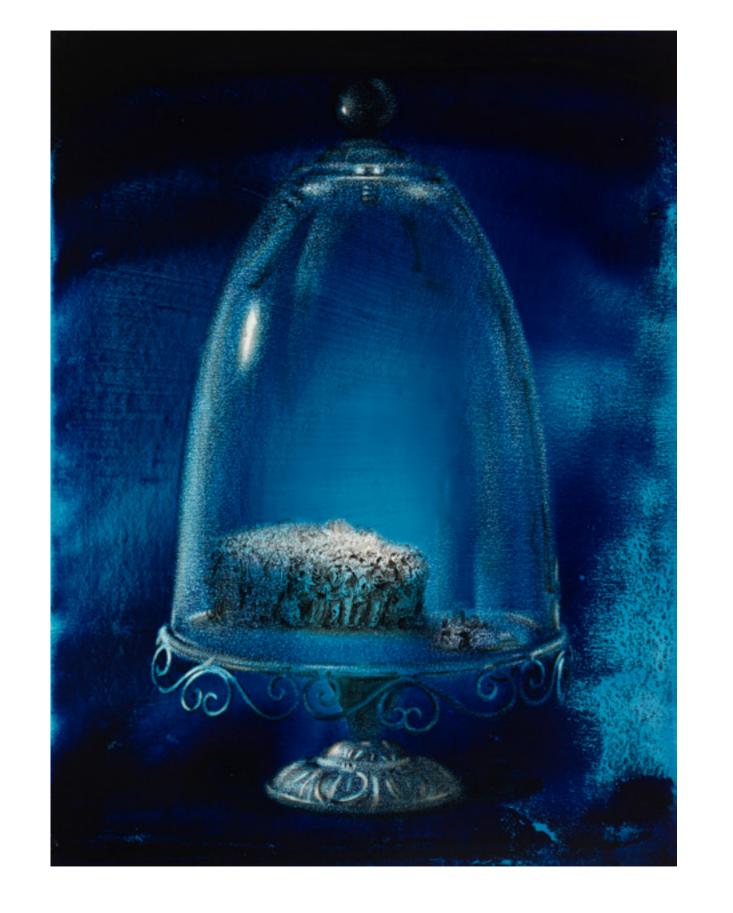


Detail













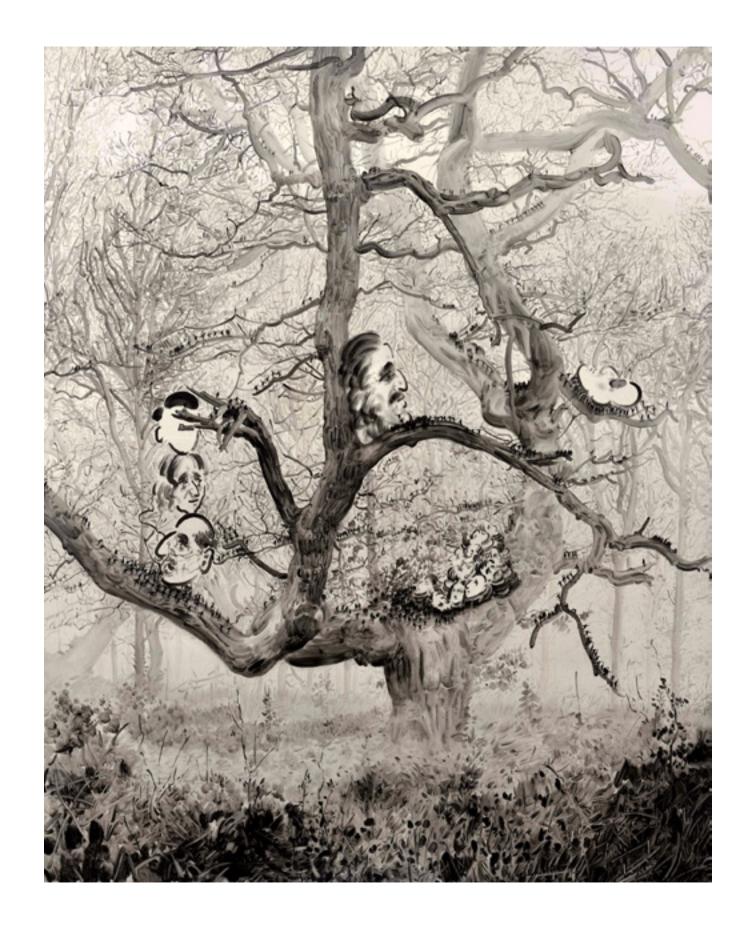




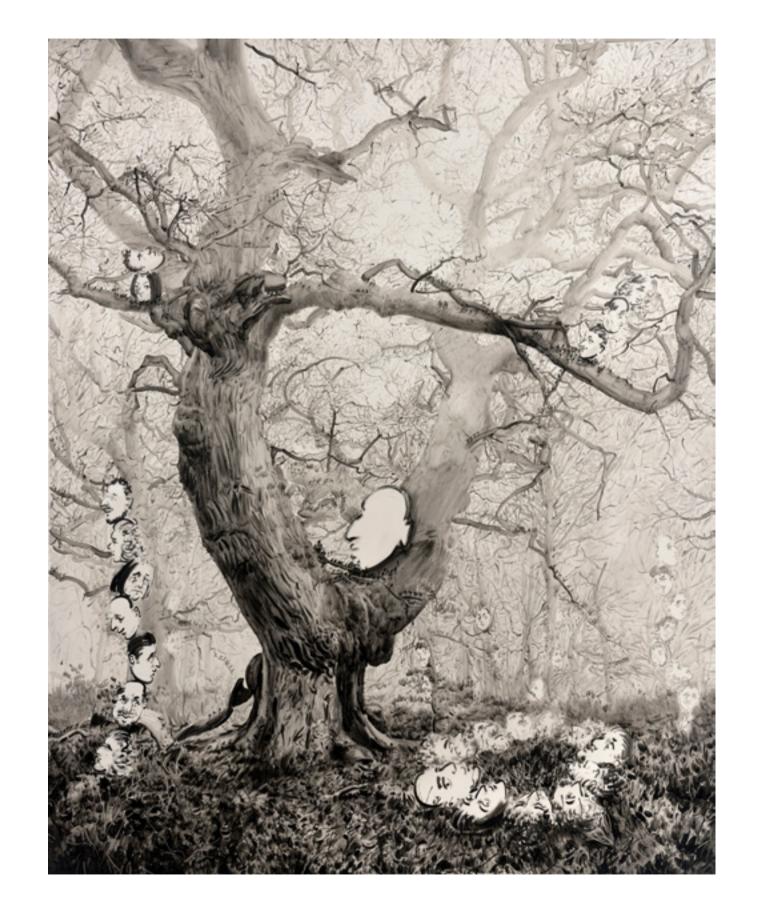














Detail





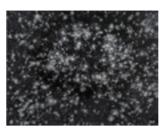




oil on canvas 22 x 30 cm, 2013



Free Fall No.4 oil on canvas 60 x 45 cm, 2018



Code No.2 oil on canvas 45 x 60 cm, 2017



Funambulist No.2 oil on canvas 45 x 60 cm, 2017



Black Dots oil on canvas 45 x 60 cm, 2018



Dancing under the Sunlight No.2 oil on canvas 45 x 60 cm, 2019



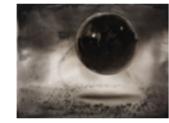
Funambulist No.9 oil on canvas 45 x 60 cm, 2017



Funambulist No.3 oil on canvas 45 x 60 cm, 2017



Circulation oil on canvas 60 x 45 cm, 2019



Suspension oil on canvas 45 x 60 cm, 2017



Funambulist No.8 oil on canvas 45 x 60 cm, 2017



Funambulist No.7 oil on canvas 45 x 60 cm, 2017



Relic No.6 oil on canvas 45 x 60 cm, 2019



Relic No.5 oil on canvas 190 x 250 cm, 2018





Game No.1 watercolour on paper 23 x 31 cm, 2018



Life Collection No.3 oil on canvas 150 x 200 cm, 2018



Black Light No.6 oil on canvas 190 x 250 cm, 2018



Game No.1 oil on canvas 120 x 150 cm, 2018



Game No.2 oil on canvas 120 x 150 cm, 2018



Dancer oil on canvas 45 x 60 cm, 2018



Container No.2 oil on canvas 60 x 45 cm, 2018



Container No.3 oil on canvas 60 x 45 cm, 2018



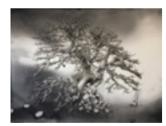
Laboratory No.6 oil on canvas 60 x 45 cm, 2018



A Piece of Black Forest Cake with Prussian Blue oil on canvas 60 x 45 cm, 2018



Dark Energy No.3 oil on canvas 120 x 150 cm, 2018



Elsewhere No.8 oil on canvas 190 x 250 cm, 2017



Dark Energy No.1 oil on canvas 190 x 250 cm, 2018



Relic No.4oil on canvas
120 x 150 cm, 2016



Black Light No.7 oil on canvas 150 x 200 cm, 2018



Center of A Circle No.1 oil on canvas 60 x 45 cm, 2017



Elsewhere No.4 oil on canvas 150 x 120 cm, 2017



Elsewhere No.6 oil on canvas 150 x 120 cm, 2017



Elsewhere No.9 oil on canvas 150 x 120 cm, 2017



Flavour No.1 oil on canvas 60 x 45 cm, 2017



Flavour No.2 oil on canvas 60 x 45 cm, 2018



Cabinet oil on canvas 150 x 200 cm, 2018



Lu Chao

Biography Graduated from Painting Department (M.A.), Royal College of Art, London, U.K. Graduated from Oil Painting Department (B.A.), Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, China Graduated from Fine art school affiliated to Central Academy of Fine Arts Born in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, China 1988 **Solo Exhibitions** 2017 Lu Chao: Black Box, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Beijing, China Black Silence, Rosenfeld Porcini Gallery, London, U.K. Black Light, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris, France 2015 Art Basel Hong Kong - Lu Chao: Black Mirror, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Hong Kong, China 2015 Lu Chao: Black Forest, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Beijing, China **Group Exhibitions** West Bund Art and Design, Solo Project, HdM GALLERY, Shanghai, China Art 021, HdM GALLERY, Shanghai, China Zona Maco, Rosenfeld Porcini Gallery, Mexico City, Mexico Art Dubai 2018, Rosenfeld Porcini, Dubai Art Paris, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris, France Art Brussels, HdM GALLERY, Brussels, Belgium Art Chengdu International Contemporary Art Fair 2018, HdM GALLERY, Chengdu, China Jing Art, HdM GALLERY, Beijing, China Art Basel, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Basel, Switzerland Summer Group Show, HdM GALLERY, Beijing, China Verticality, Rosenfeld Porcini Gallery, London, U.K. Summer Exhibition, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris, France EXPO Chicago, HdM GALLERY, Chicago, U.S.A. It All Happens After Sunset No.2, Galerie Liusa Wang, Paris, France Art Basel, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Basel, Switzerland Art 021, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Shanghai, China Art Basel, Galerie Nathalie Obadia. Hong Kong, China Art Geneva, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Geneva, Switzerland Salon du Dessin, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Beijing, China The Figure in Contemporary Art, Rosenfeld Porcini Gallery, London, U.K. Art Dallas, Rosenfeld Porcini Gallery, Dallas, U.S.A. EXPO Chicago2017, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Chicago, U.S.A.

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After the Deluge, Rosenfeld Porcini Gallery, Venice, Italy

All happens after sunset, MOCA Pavilion, Shanghai, China Art Shenzhen 2017, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Shenzhen, China Art Paris, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris, France

2016 Aurora, Soka Art Center, Beijing, China

The 'Monogatari' of Blackness, Mingo, Shanghai, China Art 021, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Shanghai, China

Across the Divide, Rosenfeld Porcini Gallery, London, U.K.

Art Shenzhen, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Shenzhen, China

New Capital: Huang Yu Collection Exhibition, Museum of Contemporary Art Chengdu, Chengdu, China

EXPO Chicago 2016, Rosenfeld Porcini Gallery, Chicago, U.S.A.

Painting as Strait Gate, Hive center of Contemporary Art, Beijing, China

Zona Maco, Rosenfeld Porcini Gallery, Mexico City, Mexico

Elsewhere, Lychee one gallery, London, U.K.

2015 Art 021, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Shanghai, China

CIGE, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Beijing, China

Art Taipei, Forbidden City Gallery, Taipei, China

Elsewhere, Lychee One, London, U.K.

Around Drawing, Rosenfeld Porcini Gallery, London, U.K.

Cos Moscow, Rosenfeld Porcini Gallery, Moscow, Russia

2015 Art Brussels, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Brussels, Belgium

2014 Saatchi New Sensation Shortlist, Victoria House, London, U.K.

Life and Hope, French Institute, Beijing, China

A New Circle, Forbidden City Gallery, Shanghai, China

River Light RCA Studio Summer Exhibition, RCA Studio, London, U.K.

Royal College of Art Graduation Exhibition, Royal College of Art, London, U.K.

London Design Festival 2014, Mint Gallery, London, U.K.

RCA Secret, Royal College of Art, London, U.K.

SOHO Art Festival 2014, London, U.K.

2014 Art Brussels, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Brussels, Belgium

2013 The Others, Hanmi Gallery, London, U.K.

Open Work, London, U.K.

Drawing Now Art Fair, Le Carrousel du Louvre, Pairs, France

2013 Art Brussels, Brussels, Belgium

RCA Secret, Dyson Gallery, Royal College of Art, London, U.K.

New Figuration: Chapter 1, Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery, Beijing, China

Multiculturalism is Dead, Bethnal Green Church, London, U.K.

Royal College of Art student show, Royal College of Art, London, U.K.

2012 Works from Students at the Royal College Of Art, Royal College of Art, London, U.K.

Exhibition of Contemporary Art, Snow Mountain Music Festival, Lijiang, China Group Show, Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, China

Enigma, Up Space, Beijing, China

2010 Giant Cup Today National Art Students Annual Awards 2010, Today Art Museum, Beijing, China Wolf Wears Sheep Skin, Up Space, Beijing, China

Awards

2018	Final List of Forbes China 30 under 30 in Art and Fashion
2014	Painter-Stainers Goron Luton Award, Royal College of Art, London, U.K. Solo Award Runners Up, London, U.K. RCA Studio, London, U.K.
2013	Lucy Halford Bursary, Royal College of Art, London, U.K.

2012 Best Creative Awards, Central Academy of Fine Art, Beijing, China

2011 Excellent Sketching Award, Central Academy of Fine Art, Beijing, China

2010 Silver Prize, Giant Cup Today National Art Students Annual Awards 2010, Today Art Museum, Beijing, China

Selected Museum & Public Collections

Fondation Louis Vuitton

Sammlung Wemhoner Collection

Ghisla Art Collection

Today Art Museum, Beijing

China Central Academy of Fine Arts

Fine art school affiliated to Central Academy of Fine Arts

Taguchi Art Collection

JNBY Collection

DSL Collection





FOUNDERS

Hadrien de Montferrand has long served as a bridge between the Art worlds of China and Europe. His more than seven years at various auction houses and Art institutions included roles as marketing director for ARTCURIAL, the largest French auction house, and for the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing. He has headed the development of the gallery in Beijing since 2009.

Laurent Dassault, an entrepreneur to the core, helped to found Arquana, continental Europe's leading horse auction house, in 2006. His entrepreneurial spirit extends to his charitable activities as well: Laurent serves as the administrator of the "Friends of Pompidou Museum's Association" in Paris, and heads the development committee for the auction house ARTCURIAL.

Olivier Hervet graduated with an MA in Classics from Oxford University in 2008. After working for Hadrien de Montferrand Gallery since its inception in 2009 where he developed the gallery's network of young collectors, he became a partner in 2012 with the goal of opening a second space in China.

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