

TONG KUNNIAO *WHEN DOG'S MOUTH SPITS IVORY*

Curated by Heinz-Norbert Jocks

Opening: Thursday, 1 June, 6 pm
HOHE STRASSE 53
2 June - 15 July 2017

Tong Kunniao, who at age 26 is well on his way to becoming a shooting star not only in China, belongs to a generation of unconventional artists who is radically setting themselves apart from the matadors and pioneers of the Chinese avant-garde with their concepts, visions, and ideas.

Tong grew up during the heyday of Chinese contemporary art, with its worldwide breakthrough at Harald Szeemann's 48th Biennale in Venice (1999) and the legendary Paris exhibition conceived by Jean-Hubert Martin, *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989). Tong, like many of his generation, is a multi-faceted artist filled with an ebullient sense of fantasy. Oscillating among media, he does not focus on a single medium. Alongside kinetic thing assemblages that are reminiscent of Jean Tinguely's loud, machine-drive machine sculptures from the 1960s – although they only vaguely have something in common – he also creates images and video works.

Tong, both an ardent poet of things that can be experienced in a tactile manner and a collecting flâneur at flea markets and on the street is something like a conceptual artist without blinders who thinks in images, that is, with his eyes. For two years now, he has been underway, as he once put it, 'feeling his way through the world like an innocent child' or 'sniffing his way around the world like a dog'.

This exhibition, curated by Heinz-Norbert Jocks, *When Dog's Mouth Spits Ivory*, is the fascinating result of one month of research in Düsseldorf that began with visits to area flea markets. He also strolled through the streets of the city, and he found things and materials which he then used to create kinetic assemblage-sculptures and unconventional images, working like an easygoing magician with a subversive sense of humour. This attests to a sensual poetry of metamorphosis and are for him unorthodox fetishes of memory and traces of culture. He uses them to give free rein to his unbridled fantasy. What emerges in the process is more than just the representation of a distant culture, but also the drive to subjectivate the junk he has collected.

For Tong, the things he has harvested are like paints for a painter, raw materials that inspire his imaginary and playful and associative visions without bounds. A joyful pleasure in movement that pulls through his entire oeuvre plays a central role here. For him, everything is in a powerful flow of constant transformation. He prefers the used to the new, things that are cheap, peripheral, discarded and disposed of, where the scars of time have left their mark, to create something unique out of them, whereby the old meanings are transcended and something sensually ambiguous can emerge. He is somebody who can create evocative poems to the eternal temporary not with words but with junk, like an obsessive daydreamer without blinders.

Heinz-Norbert Jocks

More sculptures and videos by Tong Kunniao will be on view at SETAREH GALLERY, Königsallee 27.

SETAREH GALLERY

Tong Kunniao,

Born in Changsha, Hunan Province, China in 1990, he graduated from the renowned Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing in 2015. The artist lives and works in Beijing.

Awards:

- 2014 My 2014 CAFA Sculpture Exhibition, Best Work Award, Art Channel, Beijing, CHN
CAISSA Rising Arting: The Realm of Advaita, Most Popular Award, Today Art Museum, Beijing, CHN
Art Nova 100, National Agriculture Exhibition Center, Beijing, CHN
The Second Tomorrow Contemporary Sculpture Award, Si Chuan Fine Art Institute, Chongqing, CHN
CREATIVE M50, Grand Jury Prize, M50 Art Space, Shanghai, CHN
- 2013 Da Yun Sculpture Creation Award Collecting Notice, Art Channel, Beijing, CHN

Solo Shows (selection) :

- 2017 When Dog's Mouth Spits Ivory, Setareh Gallery, Dusseldorf, DE
Dans le ventre du pigeon, il y a non seulement du caca, mais du pains aussi, Galerie Liusa Wang, Paris, FR
- 2016 Dreaming An Earth, Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, Beijing, CHN
Why Don't You Eat Stinky Tofu?, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, USA
- 2015 Tong Kunniao, Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, Beijing, CHN

Group Shows (selection):

- 2017 The Model of the World, cur. by Duan Shaofeng, Chen Xuanrong, Chen Zihau, Liu Ting, Zhangzhou International Contemporary Art Exhibition, CHN
Reversal Ritual, de Sarthe Gallery, Hong Kong, CHN
- 2016 OverPop, Yuz Museum, Shanghai, CHN
Money is coming, Chinese Museum of Finance Art Center, Beijing, CHN
Trick or Treat, Yang Art Museum, Beijing, CHN
- 2015 Relocation Jubilee, Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, Beijing, CHN
Wizardly Spaces, Onehome Art Hotel, Shanghai, CHN
Finding Friends: Discover Young Artists, Today Art Museum, Beijing, CHN
The Start of Long Journey – 2015 CAFA Excellent Graduation Work Exhibition, CAFA Art Museum, Beijing, CHN
- 2014 My 2014 CAFA Sculpture Exhibition, Art Channel, Beijing, CHN
THE REALM OF ADVAITA – Annual Nomination for Students of Contemporary Art Academies, Caissa Rising Arting – The Realm of Advaita, Today Art Museum, Beijing, CHN
The Second Tomorrow Contemporary Sculpture Award, Sichuan Fine Art Institute, Chongqing, CHN
CREATIVE M50, M50 Art Space, Shanghai, CHN

Heinz-Norbert Jocks,

born in Düsseldorf, after studies in German literature, philosophy, and history, he has worked as a writer, curator, and interviewer and has spent significant time in Beijing over the past 12 years. Co-founder of the international meta collective The Collective Eye and the author of the books Archäologie des Reisens. Ein anderer Blick auf Uecker, Das Ohr am Tatort, „Dialogue Kunst. Literatur, since 1979 he has written for the magazine Kunstforum International and been guest-editor of various thematic volumes on Chinese subjects (Ankunft in Peking; Künstler aus Peking). He has taught at Muthesius-Kunsthochschule, Fachhochschule Düsseldorf, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, HfG Karlsruhe, CAFA Beijing and is currently teaching at the Academy of Fine Arts in Tianjin, China.