Captions for Gallery 1 in Chapter 1

Lonely Childhoods and Missing Girls

1

*Born under China’s one-child policy, artist Meng Site’s art speaks to human dimensions of solitary childhoods. “These wooden beds are like cages that take away freedom,” he says. Even when he paints children in groups, each child “seems pensive and alone,” he says. “By their expressions, all give a sense of loneliness.” (3am Drum, 2013)*

*2*

*Meng Site lived a typical boy’s life in China’s Hunan province. He was an only child, raised by grandparents; his parents were migrant laborers. “I let my emotions out; that’s the point of my art,” he says. “Loneliness is a big subject for people who are the only child in a family. My inspirations come from my childhood.” (The Last Dusk, 2013)*

3

*"My generation is unique, in China and in the world,” artist Li Tianbing told The Guardian’s Jon Henley. Born in the 1970s and raised as an only child, Li observed that “we were the first not to fully know the meaning of the words 'brother' and 'sister.’ … An artist must, after all, speak of his own experience." (Don’t Touch My Dog, 2011)*

4

*Li Tianbing has only five black-and-white photos of himself as a boy. In his paintings, he adds imaginary siblings. “I took photos of children today, so there are overlapping time periods in my painting — my childhood and theirs,” he told The Independent in 2012. “It is talking about China today in an artistically obscure way.” (Moi avec mon frere blue, 2007)*

5

*In Terracotta Daughters, each sculpted girl is unique, though each is modeled on one of eight orphans that artist Prune Nourry asked to pose for her. Conceived to echo Xi’an’s “Terracotta Warriors,” Nourry renders the haunting presence of the girls who are missing due to China’s one-child policy. (Terracotta Daughters, 2014)*

6

*After opening in Shanghai, the Terracotta Daughters traveled to Paris, Zurich, New York, and Mexico City for exhibits. In 2015, Nourry buried her artwork in Xi’an, as the Terracotta Warriors were in the third century BCE. They will be unearthed when China’s gender imbalance is predicted to peak in 2030. (Terracotta Daughters, 2014)*