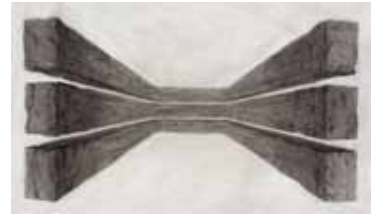
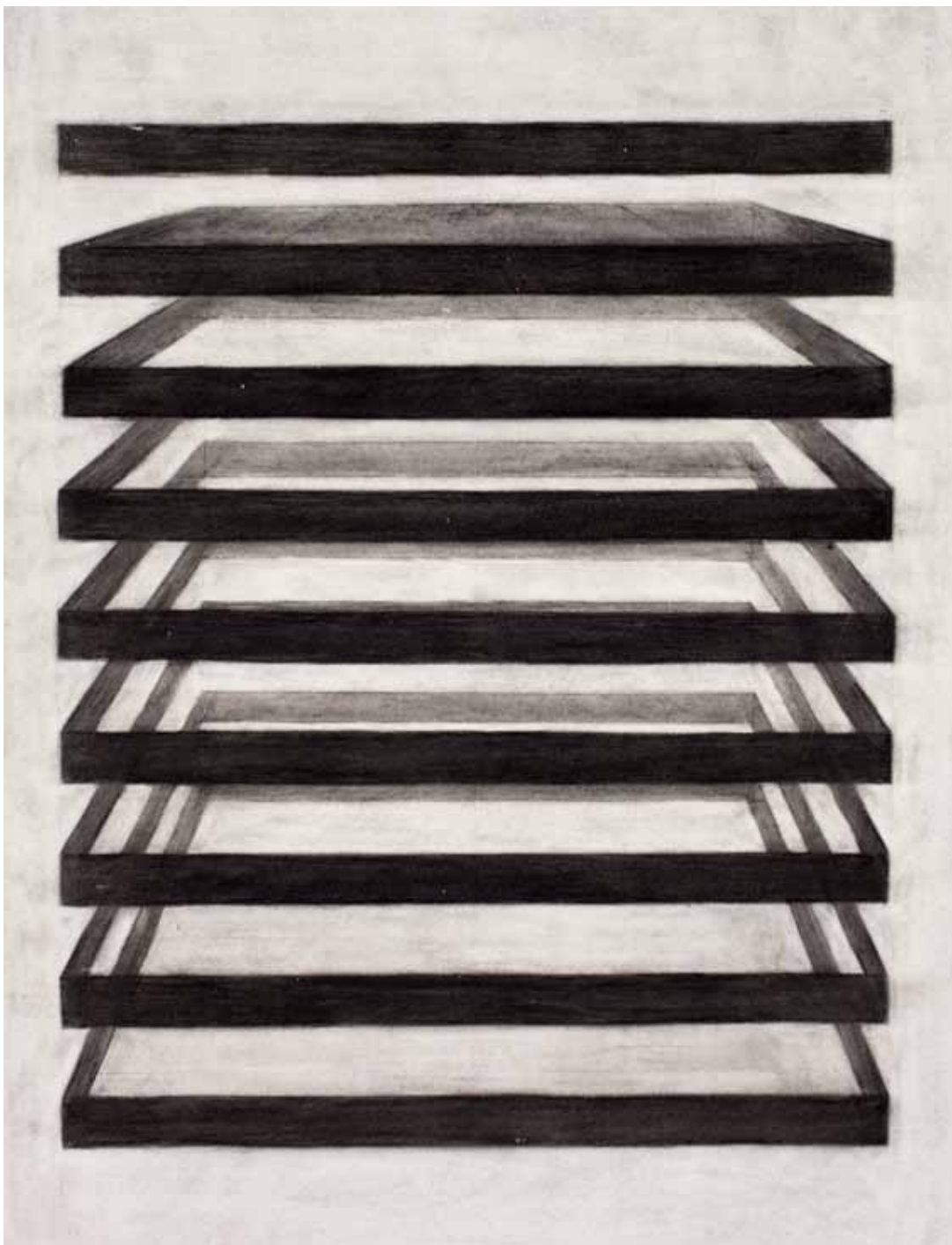


*ATKINS & AI GALLERY*  
BEIJING





Chi Ming 迟明  
*Midsummer (opposite)*  
 盛夏 ( 对面 )  
 Oil on Canvas  
 布面油画  
 2011  
 50 x 50 cm  
*Exhibited: CafaM Future, Report of Young Chinese Artists,*  
*Central Academy of Fine Art Museum, Beijing, 2012*  
 展览: 2012 年 "CAFAM 未来展, 中国青年艺术生态报告",  
 中央美术学院美术馆, 北京

J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Space 1 (above)*  
 空间习作 1 ( 上 )  
 Charcoal on Paper Mounted on Wooden Panel  
 木炭画在木板上  
 2011  
 108 x 78 cm

ATKINS & AI GALLERY  
BEIJING

"TESTING FREEDOM'S TEMPERATURE"



CHI MING - J S TAN

A DUAL EXHIBITION

IN COOPERATION WITH NIKOLAUS ELLRODT

WITH ESSAY & INTERVIEW BY MICHELLE HO

FOREWORD & DESIGN BY EMILY DE WOLFE PETTIT



JS Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Lines 1 & 2*  
 线条习作 1 和 2  
 Ink on Chinese Rice Paper  
 Mounted on Wooden Panel  
 中国水墨宣纸木板  
 2011  
 68 x 134 cm each

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Chi Ming 迟明  
*A Chinese Book*  
汉书  
Oil on Wooden Panel,  
Ink on Rice Paper, Tape  
木板油画, 中国水墨宣纸, 胶带  
2012  
40 x 40 cm

## FOREWORD

*Emily de Wolfe Pettit*

Liberty, the power of choice and self-determination, is a strange paradox that resides in the orbits of both necessity and luxury. An enigma too her friend freedom:- as much as being free from restraints suggests carte blanche, so too self-control is implied. As the cult Sci Fi novelist Frank Herbert once said:- “seek freedom and become captive of your desires; seek discipline and find your liberty.” In recent years artists Chi Ming and J S Tan, both associated with two of the world’s finest art colleges and their country’s leading art professors, yet physical and artistic worlds apart, have embarked on disciplined and deep-seated undertakings to explore processes of freedom and liberty through their artistic expression. Freedom from mantles inherited, freedom from restrictive branding to one artistic genre or style in which they excel, and as young men forging distinct personas, with the ultimate objective of securing the requisite freedom to truly engage in processes of self-determination. While commonalities to their causes and ends may exist, their journeys through these bodies of works could not be more radically different. While one is hot-headed, the other is as cool as you please; as Michelle Ho has observed:- “to be Taoist, they are fire and water”. Placing their works side-by-side, it is interesting to witness how they unfold to inform the other:- the sensual quality of Tan’s ink and charcoal works, and the perspectival layering of Chi Ming’s oil paintings are brought more to the fore in the presence of the other. What transpires is Chi Ming as captive of his desires and infinite scenarios of ambiguity in power and role plays with his muse, while J S Tan is releasing his, and finding escape, even playfulness, through discipline and unambiguity.



Chi Ming, the third generation in a family line of artists, inherited an artist’s mantle from another era. His grandfather painted portraits of Mao, in his day plastered over every factory and home across China. Ming’s father went on to the more autonomous, but no less prescribed niche of creating cinematic posters from the 70’s, and it was to the backdrop of this world that Chi Ming grew up. It was a largely monotone one, where “art” was meant to imitate life, yet life had nothing to do with art. However all of this was about to change:- Mao was dead and rampant capitalism was soon to be born; an idealist like Chi Ming needed to turn inwards, both metaphorically and literally, to find beauty and escape from the outside world’s ensuing chaos and ‘orderlessness’ as he calls it. Unlike his father and grandfather before him, Chi Ming is fortunate to be able to fully indulge his artistic freedom and is keen to find beauty and theatricality, a seed planted by his father, in everything around him. J S Tan, on the other hand, was born into a family with no artist precedent. In this context, his choice of artist career was certainly exotic, and possibly contra to expectations, particularly

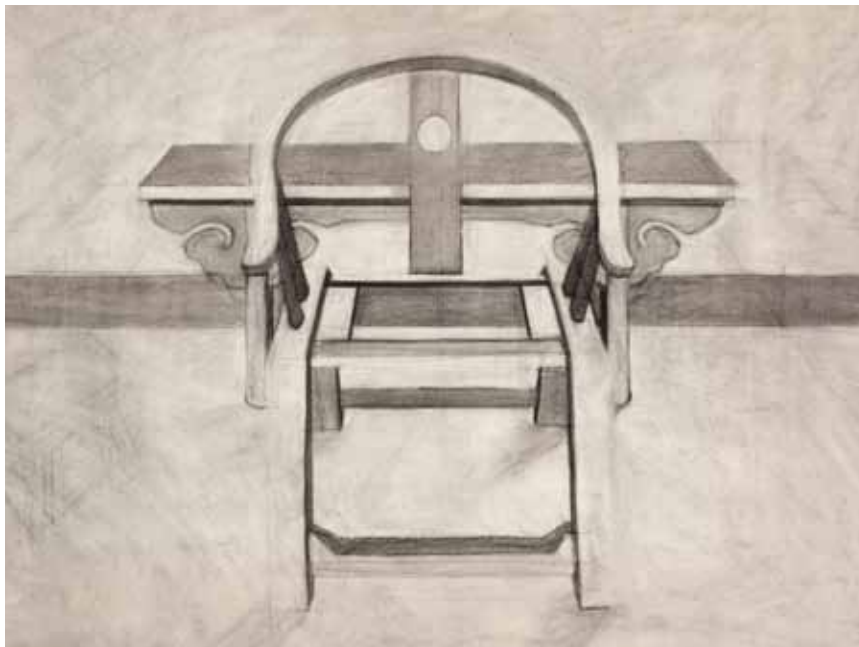
Chi Ming 迟明  
*A Mind that Changed the World*  
他曾改变世界  
Oil on Wood  
木板油画  
2012  
20 x 20 cm

J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Chair in Space 2 (inset, opposite)*  
空间中的椅子习作 2 (对面)  
Charcoal on Paper Mounted on Wooden Panel  
木炭画在木板上  
2011  
113 x 136 cm



for this outwardly practical, multi-talented character who may have pursued many a more 'mainstream' career. Tan's earlier works reveal his negotiation of this circumstance, in works rife with the sinister side to external power structures, and social hierarchies' entitlement and inequality. Ambivalence, and the tart taste of conscious choice over un-navigated terrain, have been all too familiar to both as men and artists.

While Chi Ming finds release through the fractious nature of existence in his highly expressionistic oil paintings, J S Tan conversely sifts chaos through stabilized, logical forms and finds release through their inherent stability. Chi Ming's world is erotic, voyeuristic and highly corporeal, one that he conjures through a multitude of small, tangential brushstrokes and density of a range of colours combined to give primacy to feeling. It is obvious that he takes pleasure in applying his painterly skills to explore textures, to uncover the female form in particular, and applies his refined sense of palette to romanticize interior, private spaces, the place of exploration for alter egos and sexual fantasies. Chi Ming savors a cache of open-ended questions through ambiguous references, for instance the knife, an instrument of threat and attack in a lover's hand in *Midsummer*, or his young niece made up as a grown woman in *Playing Adult* or, conversely, his



muse infantilized and clutching a teddy bear in *Longing for Childhood*. He delves into the clandestine world of S & M in *Chain*, depicts figures as headless or only partially rendered, sometimes retaining on the canvas a ream of tape over the heads of his subjects in works such as *A Chinese Book*, *Off the Wooden Floor* and *Lovers*. For Chi Ming, it is as if his embrace of absolute freedom, however anarchic, is an antidote to the trivial, commonplace strains of contemporary living - and moreover, affirmation of life. In this exhibition, J S Tan has taken the pole opposite approach through his body of ink and charcoal works, relinquishing power to logical, pre-determined directives and irrefutable forms. In contrast to Chi Ming, Tan is thereby revealing beauty in, and *through the process of*, order. While, as Michelle Ho has observed, Tan's earlier images "imposed psychological and emotional control over the viewer", his most recent body of charcoal and ink works conversely "liberate into the purity of shapes and lines, the order and security of unchanging geometrical laws". Tan goes on:- "space eats into space... leading to autonomy". Tan's enormous discipline in creating a highly sensitive gradation of shading through a monochromatic palette reveals both skill and moreover, resolve. That is not to say he has also not had fun with these works, describing *Study of Bricks in Space V* as reminding him of a "big bow tie". Observing Chi Ming and Tan's works in conjunction with each other also reveals the cross-over cultural approaches of the two. Just as J S enters an Eastern, and moreover Confucian realm of self-cultivation and discipline, espousing tenets that one must first govern oneself before one can govern others, through technical mastery over his chosen materiality, Chi Ming exudes Western, and specifically Cartesian, models of both individualism and dualism of mind over matter.

It is Atkins and Ai's great privilege to showcase the joint exhibition, *Testing Freedom's Temperature*. Our thanks to Nikolaus Ellrodt for bringing us to Chi Ming and continued thanks to Ian Charles Stewart for his introduction to the diverse J S Tan. We are fortunate indeed to have Michelle Ho, part of the Emmy-award winning team at Yuanfang Media, as writer and interviewer.

*"But where the danger is, also grows the saving power."*  
 - Friedrich Hölderlin



Chi Ming 迟明  
*As the Burning  
 Sun Fades (inset)*  
 他曾改变世界  
 Oil on Canvas  
 布面油画  
 2012  
 50 x 70 cm



Chi Ming 迟明  
*After School (Self-Portrait)*  
 放学后  
 Oil on Canvas  
 布面油画  
 2012  
 40 x 50 cm

*All Works Exhibited: CafaM Future,  
 Report of Young Chinese Artists,  
 Central Academy of Fine Art Museum, Beijing, 2012*  
 展览：2012 年  
 “CAFAM 未来展，中国青年艺术生态报告”，  
 中央美术学院美术馆，北京





Chi Ming 迟明  
*Friendship I*  
 友谊  
 Oil on Canvas  
 布面油画  
 2012  
 50 x 40 cm



Chi Ming 迟明  
*Childhood Colours*  
 童年的色彩  
 Oil on Wooden Panel  
 木板油画  
 2012  
 20 x 20 cm



J S Tan 陈建升

*The Glutton*

格鲁顿一家

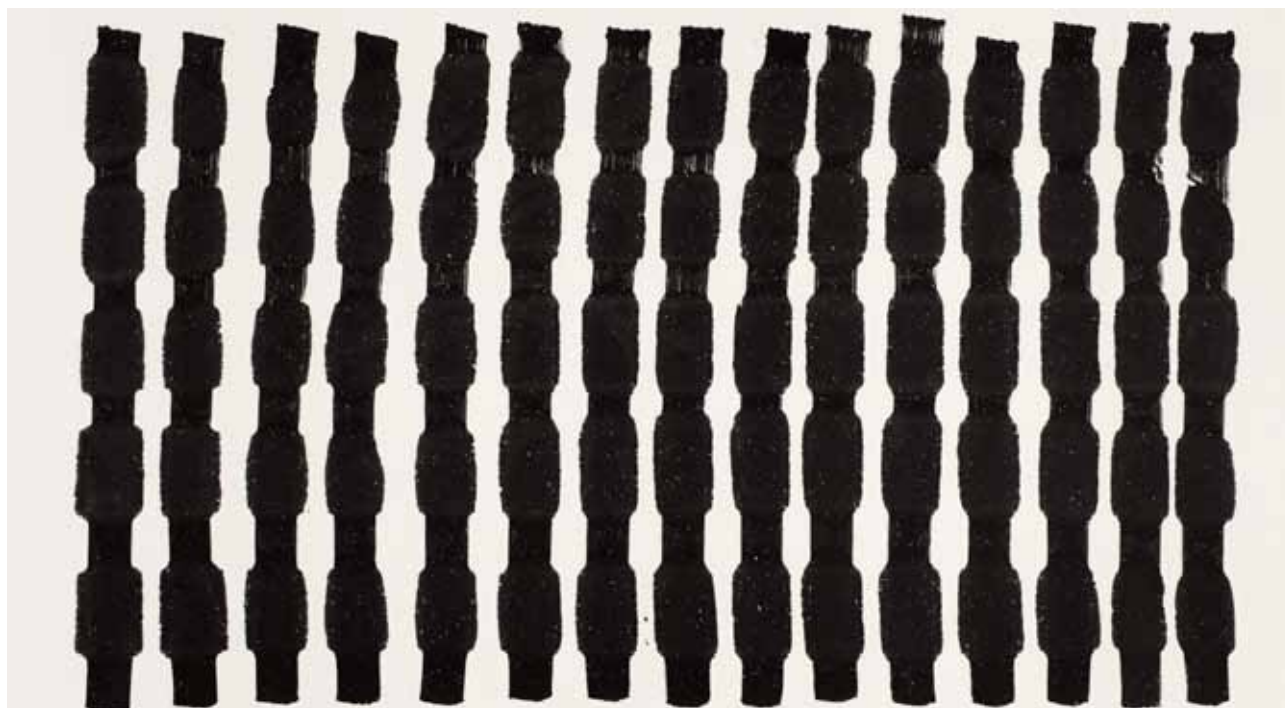
Oil on Canvas

涂底帆布油画

2010

150 x 200 cm

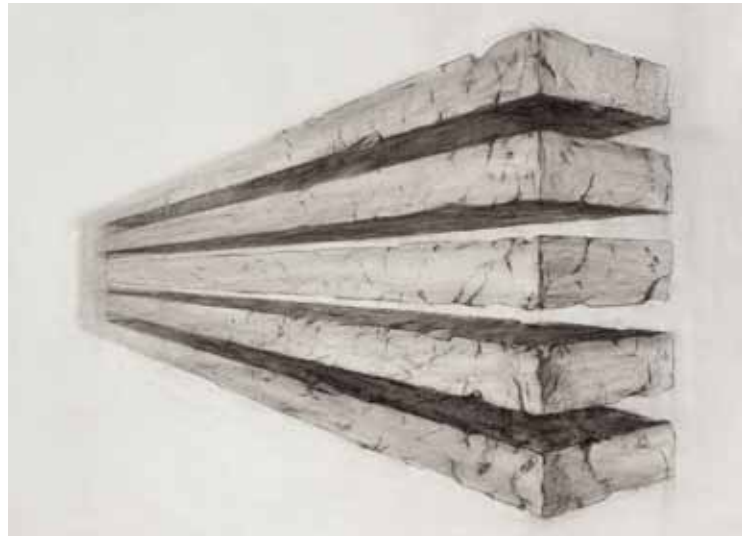
*Private Collection, London, United Kingdom*



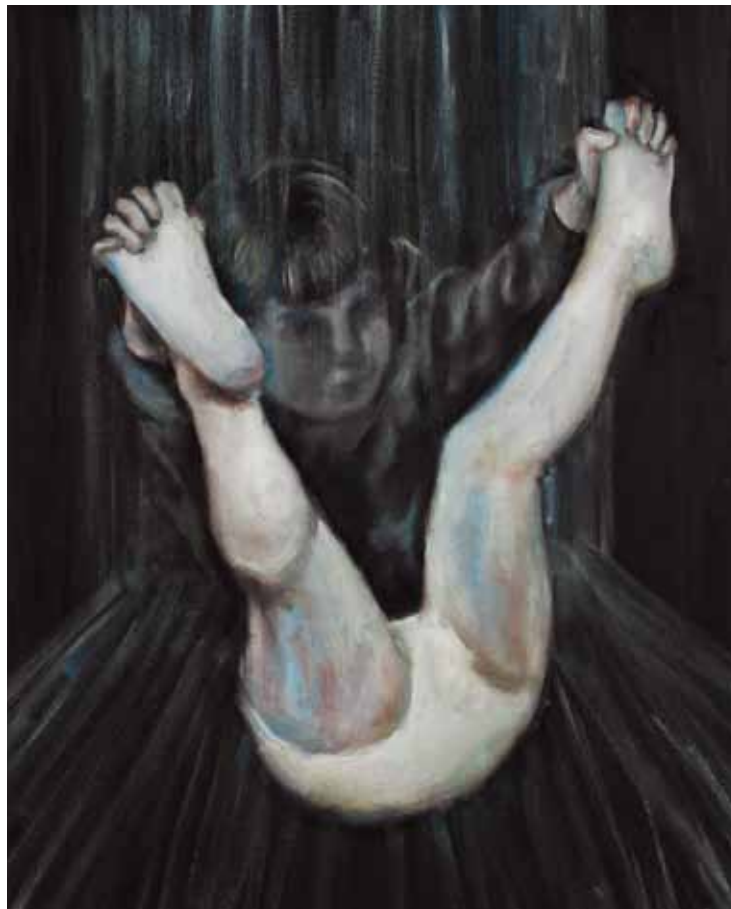


J S Tan 陈建升  
*Screaming Girl*  
 吼叫的女孩  
 Oil on Unprimed Canvas  
 原色帆布油画  
 2010  
 60 x 40 cm

"I got peace of mind, only through the study of rules  
 nobody could change." – Louise Bourgeois



J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Bricks in Space 4*  
 空间中的砖块习作 4  
 Charcoal on Paper  
 Mounted on Wooden Panel  
 木炭画在木板上  
 2011  
 76 x 106 cm



J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Lines 3*  
 (inset, opposite)  
 线条习作 3 (对面)  
 Ink on Chinese Rice Paper  
 Mounted on Wooden Panel  
 中国水墨宣纸木板  
 2011  
 68 x 134 cm

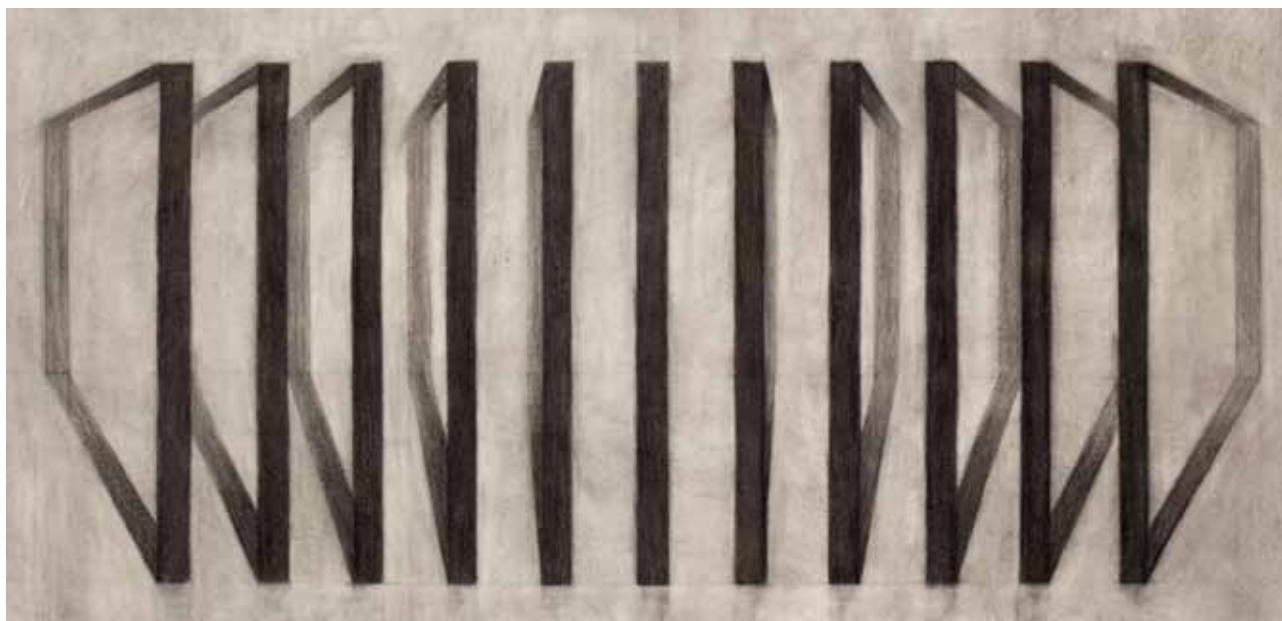
J S Tan 陈建升  
*Girl Falling*  
 (Homage to Marlene Dumas)  
 坠落的女孩  
 Oil on Unprimed Canvas  
 原色帆布油画  
 2010  
 140 x 100 cm  
 Private Collection, China

## CATALOGUE ESSAY

Michelle Ho

"The increase of destructiveness goes side by side with the increase of human skill, for like the Monkey with magical powers, we are able to walk upon the clouds and turn somersaults in the air, to pull monkey hair out of our monkey legs and transform them into little monkeys to harass the enemy, to knock at the very gates of Heaven, brush the Heavenly Gate Keeper brusquely aside and demand a place in the company of the gods".

- The Art of Living, Lin Yutang



Some time ago, Carl Jung declared that "our fearsome gods have changed their names - they now rhyme with -ism." Like the Monkey with magical powers in *Journey to the West*, we swept aside all heavenly authority and erected our great institutions of democracy, capitalism and science. Their heavenly hosts, including cynicism, secularisation, disenchantment and skepticism followed soon after. But lately, the world has started to grow tired of these -isms. And the rise of China, likened to some irrational and uncontrollable force to the West with its millennia-old culture of realism and a philosophy more content with marveling at, rather than demystifying, every working of the universe, has been uncannily timely. For while the revolution of radical rationalization is still unfolding, a newfound mystification with technology and a more primordial, spiritual state of being is rearing its head. And in the works of two talented young artists Chi Ming and J S Tan are the ominous stirrings of this new intersection between disenchantment and a counterculture of re-enchantment.

J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Space 4*  
空间习作 4  
Charcoal on Paper Mounted on Wooden Panel  
木炭画在木板上  
2011  
95 x 160 cm



Shandong-born artist Chi Ming looks on his generation with a complex attitude. Through round, Puyi-esque glasses, he sees a cold reality riddled with the quasi-mythical. His birthplace, Yantai City, today a major industrial hub, was where the emperor Qin Shi Huang once searched for the elixir of immortality. His grandfather was a painter whose life and labour revolved around the sacred aura of Mao Zedong, while his father painted cinematic posters propagating the Chairman's messaging. From such roots, Chi Ming moved to Beijing in 2001 to study at the Central Academy of Fine Arts. At that time Chi's creative environment was dominated by the prolific painter and professor Liu Xiaodong, whose fluid and narrative style of realism rode against the wave of Political Pop and Cynical Realism. Chi went on to forge his own brand of realism, pursuing emotional honesty over innovation for innovation's sake and a philosophy of mankind as "earth-bound".



Chi Ming 迟明  
*Black Skies*  
乌云满天  
Oil on Wooden Panel  
木板油画  
2011  
60 x 60 cm



Whereas his grandfather painted Mao portraits during the Cultural Revolution and his father caught the end of the “religion” of Mao, Chi Ming questions the effects of self as religion for his own generation. The end of Mao marked the end of an era of heroism and dignity owing to an intimate alliance among men united under a single vision (*Friendship I*, illustrated page 9, is in stark contrast to *Friendship II*, page 40). For Chi Ming, China’s most rapid era of economic change delivered one form of freedom but a new imprisonment under materialism and cultural dissipation. Born without heroes or ideals, the only suitable posture for the Chinese youth of the last two decades seems to have a jaded acceptance towards a fragmented and materialistic reality. It’s a social condition aptly captured in *Gates Opened* (page 45), an ironically grandiose title for the scene of a bedroom with an unreachable window and lamp shining on an empty bed.



The urge for freedom takes shape in Chi Ming’s works as a defiance of accepted social norms, distorted perspectives and in some cases, a sublimation of reality, as Chi dances between Realism, Surrealism and Romanticism. A heady dose of the latter appears in *Ballet Dream II* (page 44), where Chi’s muse and girlfriend is depicted as a stone-faced Degasian ballerina; its inversion manifests as she appears in a blonde wig in the foreboding *Black Skies* (page 13) and *KTV* (cover), thereby offering a temporary release by allowing Chi to subvert the identities of his subject. As he looks for the surreal in life (*A Fire in the Winter*, page 25) or fashions it (*Whereabouts of Harm*, page 28), Chi captures the longings for a narrative arc. He also continuously seeks ideals amongst China’s Post-80s generation, one controlled by politics

Chi Ming 迟明  
*Valentine's Day* (opposite, top)  
 情人节 (对面, 上)  
 Acrylic on Paper, Framed  
 纸上丙烯  
 2012  
 25 x 52 cm

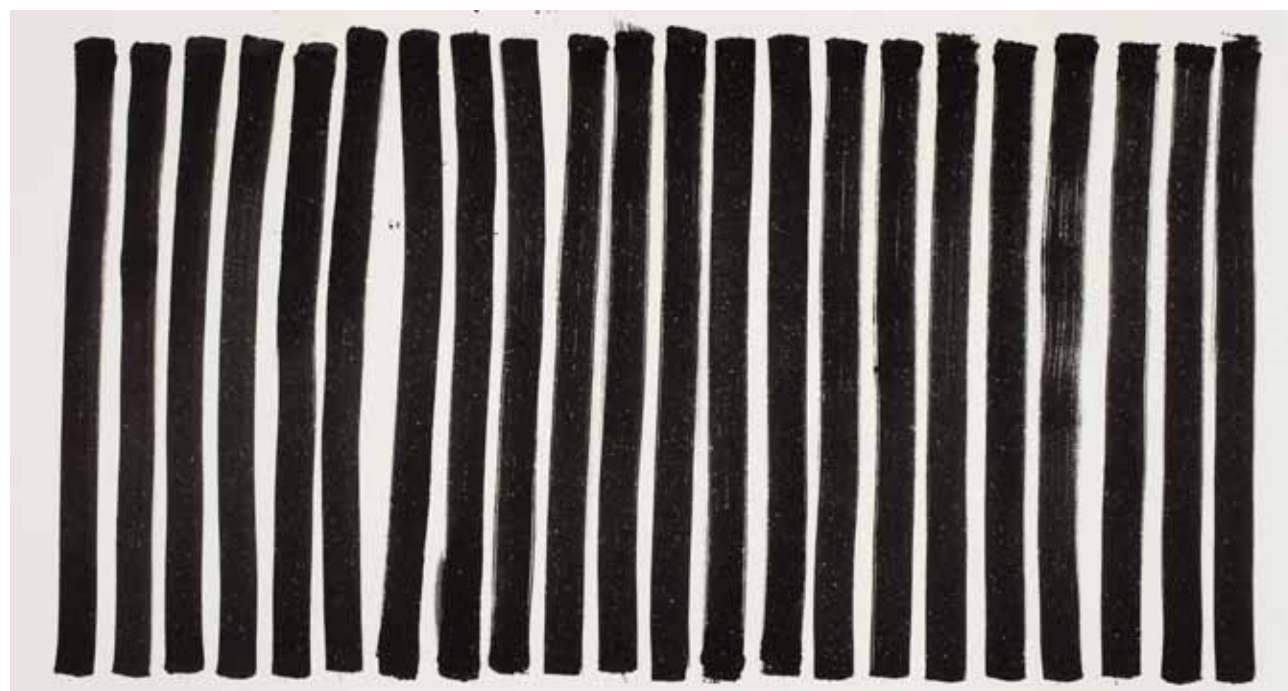
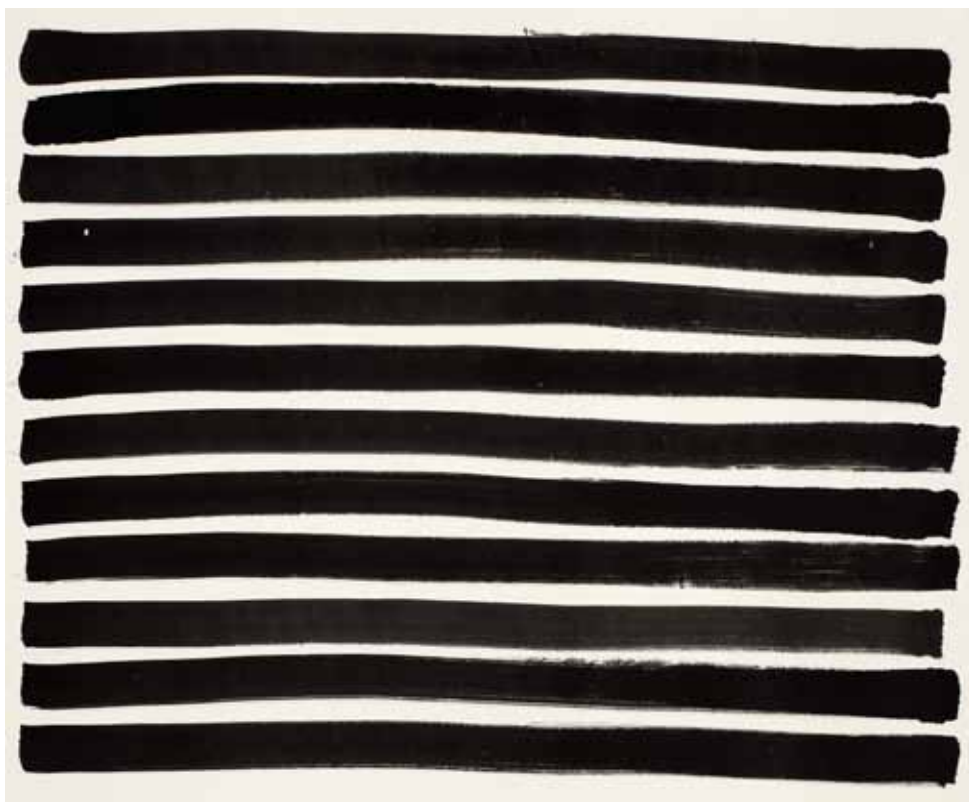
Chi Ming 迟明  
*Wake Up*  
 一觉醒来  
 Oil on Wooden Panel  
 木板油画  
 2012  
 20 x 20 cm

Chi Ming 迟明  
*My Own Beat* (opposite)  
 自拍 (对面)  
 Oil on Wooden Panel  
 木板油画  
 2012  
 20 x 20 cm



and money and caged inside its own superficial freedom. The absent figures in *Past Lovers* (page 38), for instance, create a sacred zone in the middle of reality protected from decay and disenchantment. Elsewhere, Chi Ming's depiction of intense, almost intoxicating interior spaces, as exemplified in his *Ballet Dream* series, appear illuminated like a stage set with the players about to enter. The parallel of reality to theatricality in Chi Ming's body of works reveals a desire to treat life with the same hallowed reverence that directors and actors reserve for the stage.





J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Lines 6*  
 线条习作 6  
 Ink on Chinese Rice Paper  
 Mounted on Wooden Panel  
 中国水墨宣纸木板  
 2011  
 68 x 134 cm

J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Lines 7 (top)*  
 线条习作 7 (上)  
 Ink on Chinese Rice Paper  
 Mounted on Wooden Panel  
 中国水墨宣纸木板  
 2011  
 66 x 83 cm





Chi Ming 迟明  
*Red Handprint*

红手印

Oil on Canvas

布面油画

2011

50 x 50 cm

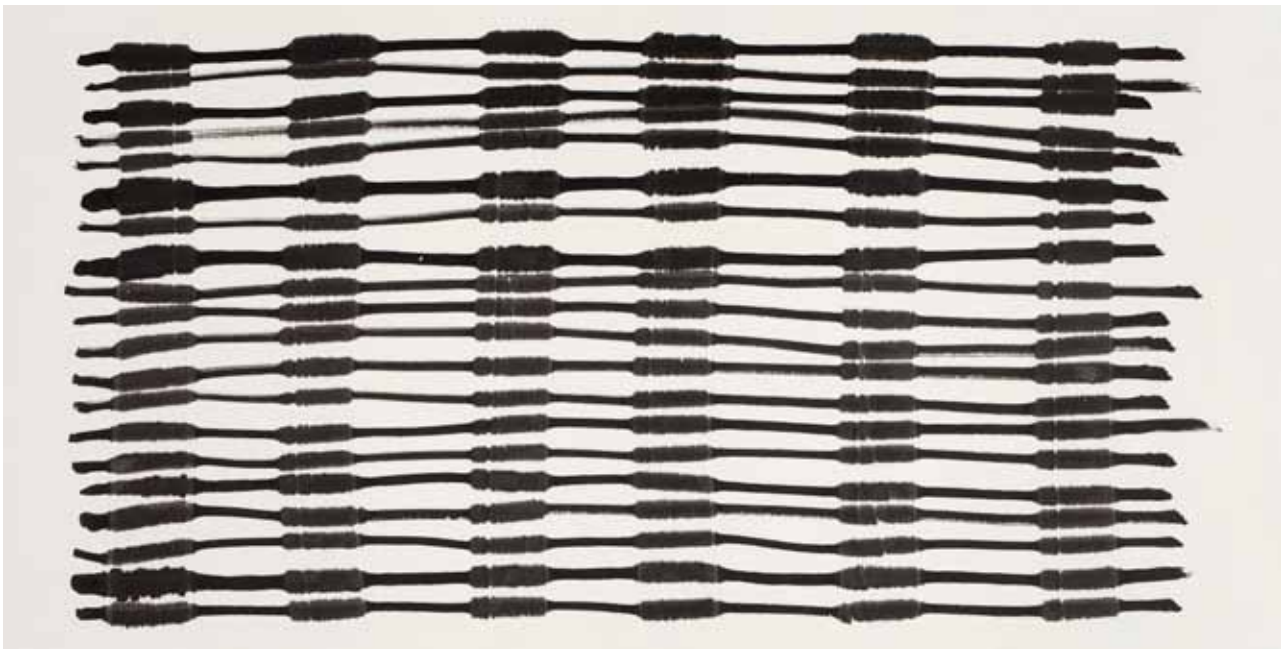
*Exhibited: Cafam Future, Report of Young Chinese Artists,  
Central Academy of Fine Art Museum, Beijing, 2012*

展览: 2012年“CAFAM未来展, 中国青年艺术生态报告”,  
中央美术学院美术馆, 北京

Producing his works from a modest studio, where neighbours' laundry line the corridors and stray cats roam the communal grounds, Chi brings to life an autobiographical but powerfully representative world with expressionistic detail and a great sensitivity to palette. By depicting his subjects as cut-off figures, erased faces and seemingly unfinished spaces, Chi hints at an alternative reality and more vital force that evades our grasp. But whereas in *Past Lovers* that space represents a bygone purity, the motifs of sexual sadism in *Midsummer* (title page) and *Chain* (opposite), vanity and decay in *A Chinese Book* (page 5) and *Longing for Childhood* (page 56), and encroaching perspectival layers in *Ballet Dream I* (page 37) and *Dry and Hot* (page 49) suggest that that vital force may be essentially destructive and uncontrollable. Indeed, in conversation with Chi Ming, he questions whether the force behind man's heroism, his creativity and violence may well be one and the same.

The "life force" has indeed appeared before. It has been named Eros, Thanatos, and Bacchus in the West. Each time it seduced with a reaffirmation of life but ultimately reeled into chaos. In the East, as Chi Ming himself has alluded, the Bushido code of the Samurai offered a way to harness the fierce spirit of man under well-defined tenants of conduct and wisdom. But it was only temporary at best. Confucianism likewise may have underpinned Chinese civilization for millennia but was gradually taken to justify violence in private spheres. In *After School* (page 8) the scene surrounding the self-portrait of a fearful-looking young Chi Ming is charming, comely and as tactile as the reams of paper upon which the young ward of a disciplinarian father is dutifully practicing his calligraphy. And despite or because of, his first-hand familiarity with physical harshness, Chi often depicts the aesthetic and the sensual or a sense of looming destruction, no matter how quotidian the scene. If re-engagement with man's pre-civilisation spirit holds the potential for emancipation and cultural re-invigoration, Chi Ming approaches it with a mixture of fascination and caution.

In the works of J S Tan, the exploration of a culturally or primordially more authentic time and space plays out with equally haunting power. In his first solo exhibition "Culture of Entitlement", Tan forced us to confront our modern institutions like a Dorian Gray before his portrait. For all of modernity's achievements, it created an iron-cage of bureaucracy that entitled sanctimonious but disempowering institutions such as religious orders, monarchical powers and gender-based systems, to oppress or leave behind those who did not conform. Tan in such works as *Girl Falling*, *Glutton* and *Girl Screaming* (illustrated pages 10 - 11) unmasked the bitter illusions left over from the Enlightenment which had failed to deliver the promise of human order and liberation based on human praxis.

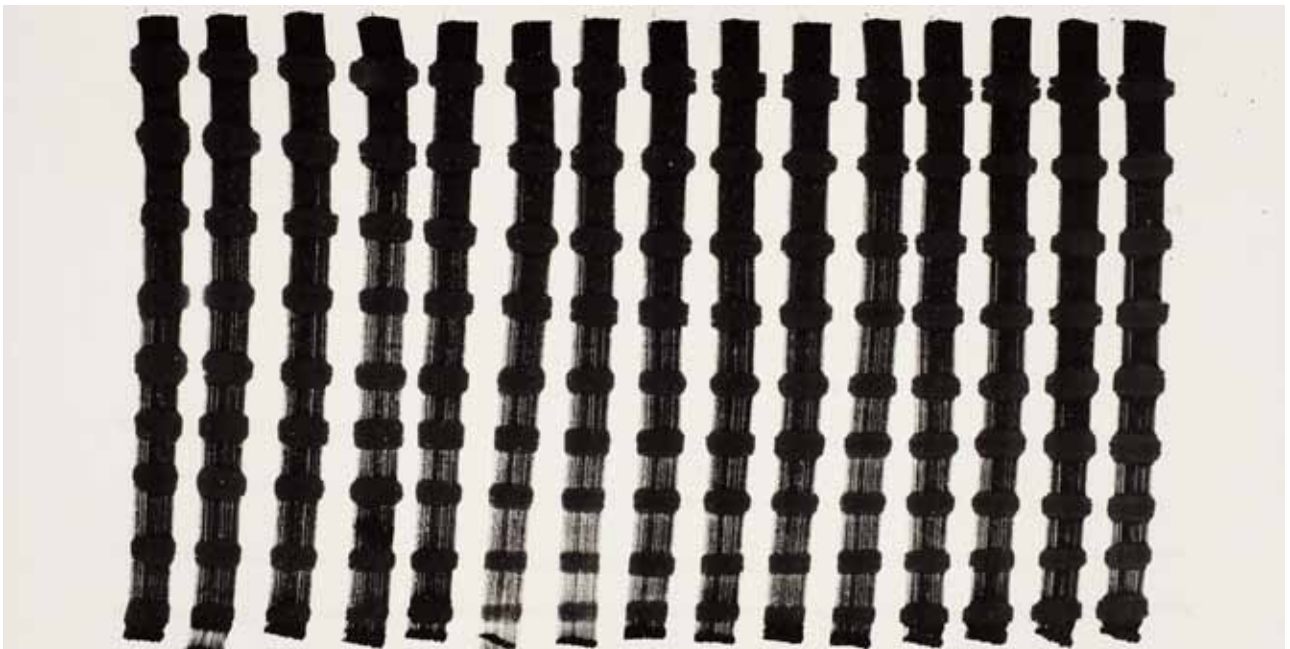


J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Lines 5 (inset)*  
 线条习作 5  
 Ink on Chinese Rice Paper  
 Mounted on Wooden Panel  
 中国水墨宣纸木板  
 2011  
 68 x 134 cm

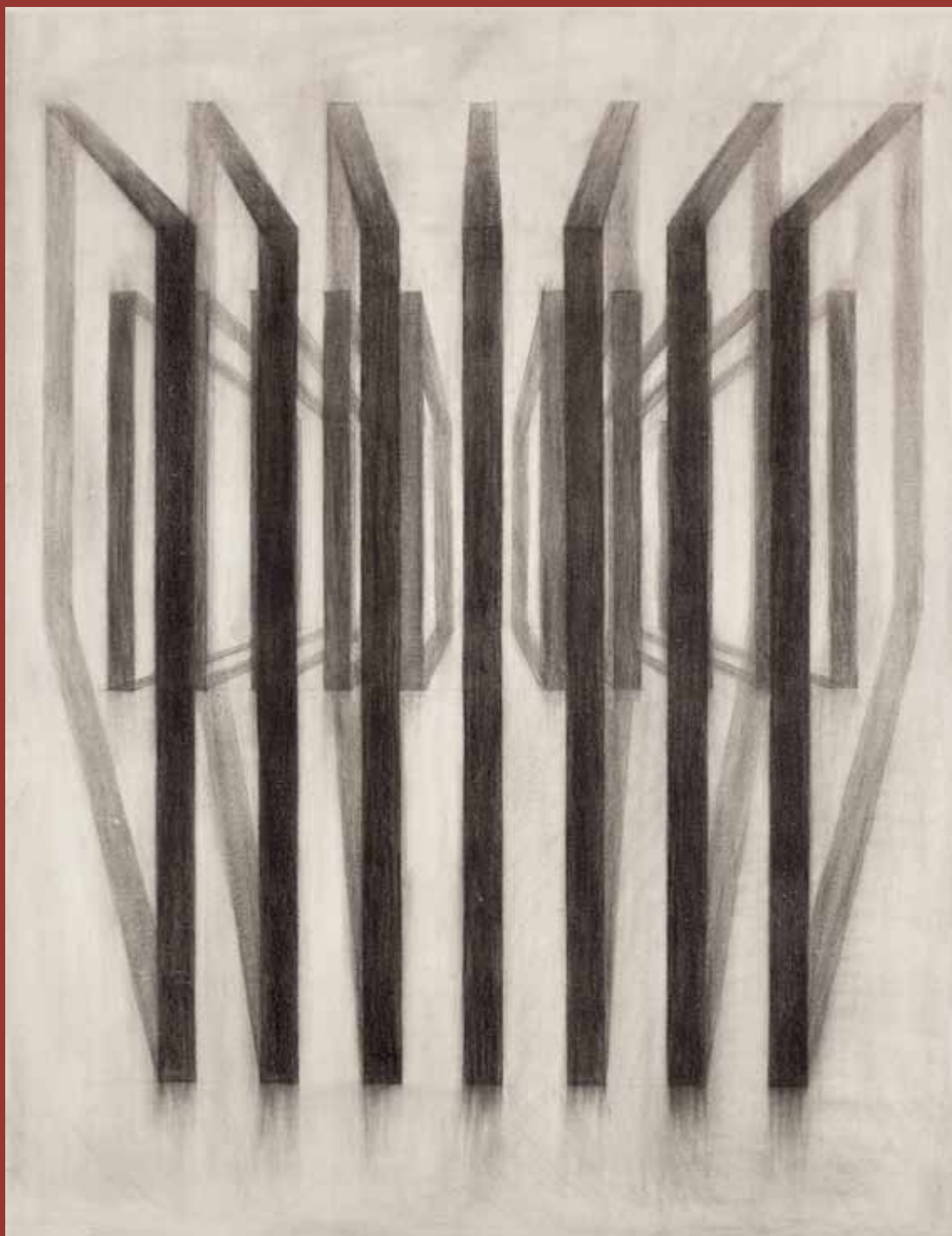




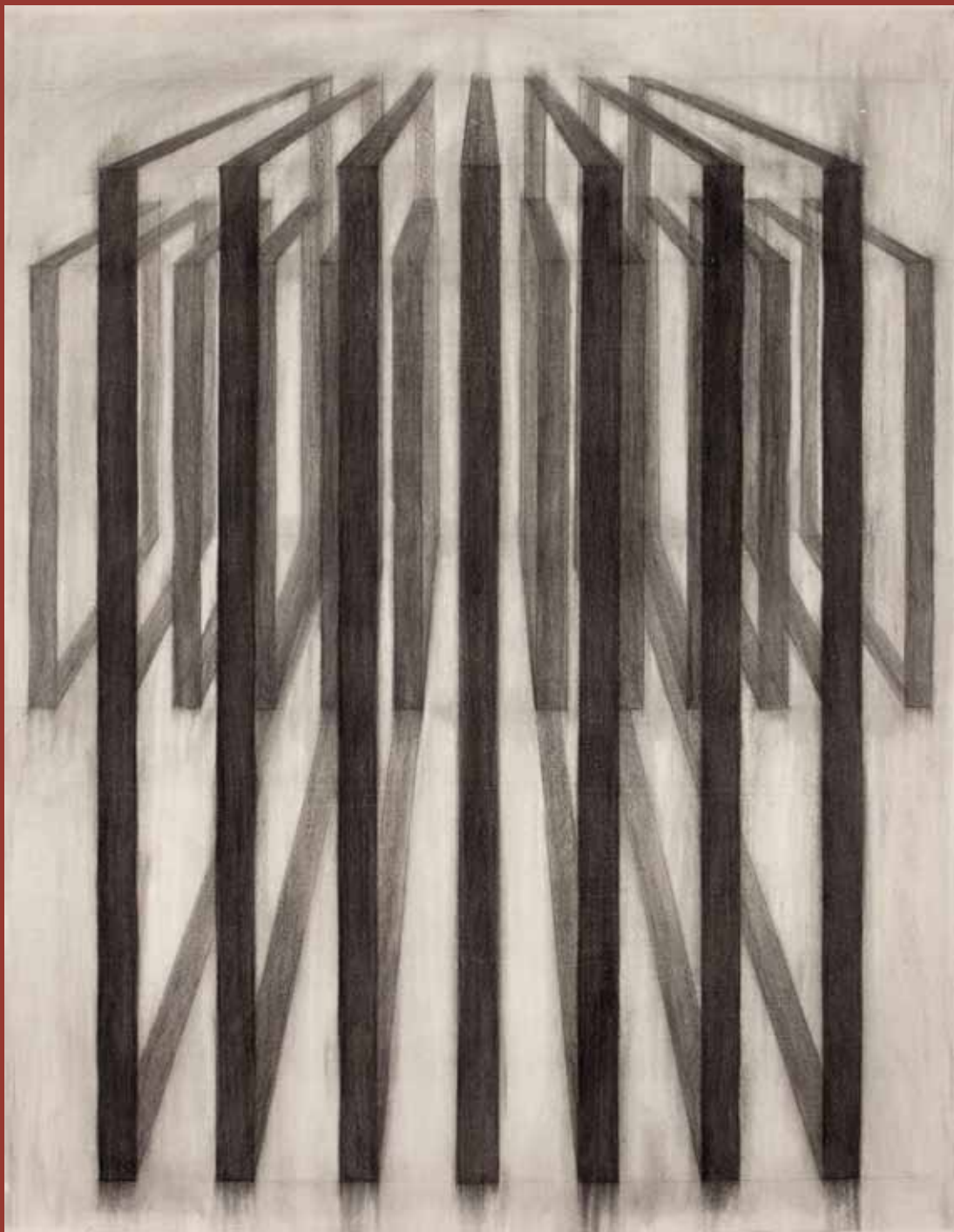
Chi Ming 迟明  
*Chain*  
 锁链  
 Oil on Canvas  
 布面油画  
 2012  
 50 x 50 cm



J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Lines 4 (inset)*  
 线条习作 4  
 Ink on Chinese Rice Paper  
 Mounted on Wooden Panel  
 中国水墨宣纸木板  
 2011  
 68 x 134 cm



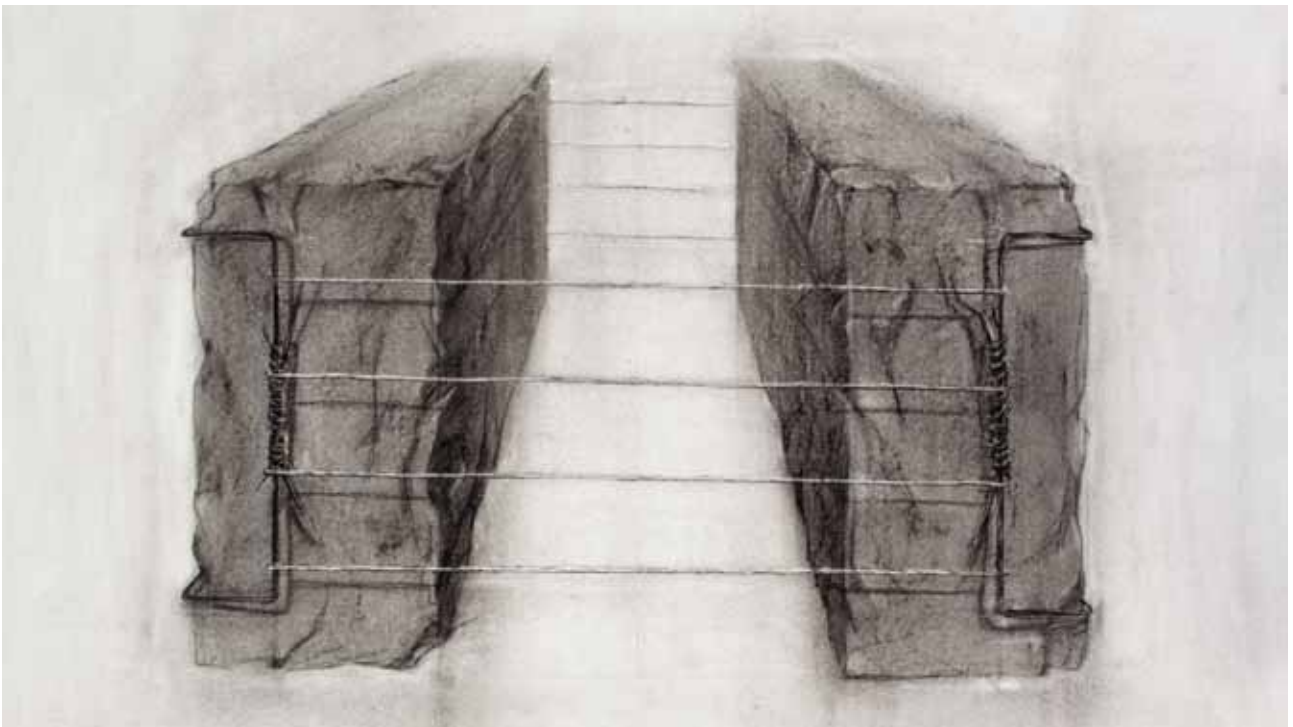
JS Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Space 2*  
空间习作 2  
Charcoal on Paper Mounted on Wooden Panel  
木炭画在木板上  
2011  
160 x 123 cm



JS Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Space 3*  
空间习作 3  
Charcoal on Paper Mounted on Wooden Panel  
木炭画在木板上  
2011  
160 x 123 cm

A year later, Tan has surprised his observers with a major conceptual shift. His figurative paintings have given way to a series of enigmatic charcoal drawings and inks. Human agents have been plucked out of the picture and in their place, shapes and lines, bricks and wires, and unnamable objects float in space. With the meticulous gradation of a monochromatic palette, Tan begins to liberate from the breakdown of man-made hierarchies into the order and security of unchanging geometrical laws.

*Study of Space 1* (title page) could be a metaphor for such a transitional moment. Like some Weberian iron-cage of a technically ordered, regimented, dehumanized society, it taunts with a passage to freedom but finally clamps down with an impenetrable top. And although ordered, Tan's hypnotic compositions such as *Study of Space 2* and *Study of Space 3* (pages 20 and 21) form a visual entrapment that arrests the viewer in contradictory states of inevitable escape and inevitable imprisonment. The paradox sustained in these works is a little like Schrödinger's cat, the enduring icon of quantum mechanics which presents the scenario of a cat in a black box that is alive and dead based on a quantum truth but alive and dead when we look into the box. We step into the twilight zone again in the works *Study of Chair in Space*,



where the world of qualities (the chair) eats into the dimension of abstract space as if the former belonged to a mightier, immutable substratum. But the illusion of security does not hold. Isolated and austere, the chair sits reminiscent of Andy Warhol's 1964 *Electric Chair*, suspended in a wash of still mist with its arms pinned down by two dark ominous bars. We are left wondering, with a mixture of attraction and fear that borders on the sublime, whether an alternative order is really being presented here.

Certainly the tumultuous decades of modernity, from its global wars and totalitarian regimes to systemic financial meltdowns, have proven society's ability to forge new myths out of moments of despair. And so what began as an urge to escape has the power to transcend into a revitalization movement, not least of which is China's opening-and-reform in the 1970s. Chinese artists likewise burst through the socialist representational tradition and its remarkably constrained but fertile environment to give birth to some of the most significant Chinese contemporary art movements such as Cynical Realism in the 1990s. Today, Tan's work represents not only that of a generation standing at the tail end of disenchantment but at the intersection between art and mankind's greatest creative power yet: technology.

The Hong Kong-born, Beijing-raised Tan these days straddles computer science, design and art theory as both a student and a practitioner in Rhode Island, U.S. And with digital design guru John Maeda as a major influence, Tan has embraced a new world of "magic", programming vast, sprawling digital universes. The fascination and creative play revived by technology represents a crucial counter tendency in modern culture that has emerged to fill the void of



departed beliefs. The longing for other worlds, once satisfied by religion and visions of heaven, is now being answered by virtual universes with new social architecture and identities, and their own rules of life and death.

As the modernist project delegitimizes, another response that has emerged is a re-enchantment with the spiritual or primordial. Indeed, recent years have seen the spiritualities and philosophies of the East migrate into the West, sometimes arriving whole, but more often cut up and customised. In Tan's large-scale work *Menhirs* (pages 32 - 33), towering blocks rise like caged ominous symbols, silent but expectant and guarding a light whose origin is obscure. By drawing on the image of Menhirs, ancient stones thought to have been used by druids for human sacrifice or remnants of a complex ideological system, Tan no longer portrays an individual or collective body struggling against a system, but a more mysterious primitive force awaiting liberation. In his ink works on rice paper, the impression of captive fences (*Study of Lines 6 and 7*, page 16) are challenged by a more playful rediscovery of lines and looser, calligraphic brushwork that call up a traditional Chinese artistic sensibility more intimate with the spirit of things than rigid outward form or realistic reenactment (*Study of Lines 1 and 2*, page 4).



Chi Ming 迟明  
*Jessica*  
Oil on Wooden Panel  
木板油画  
2011  
60 x 60 cm



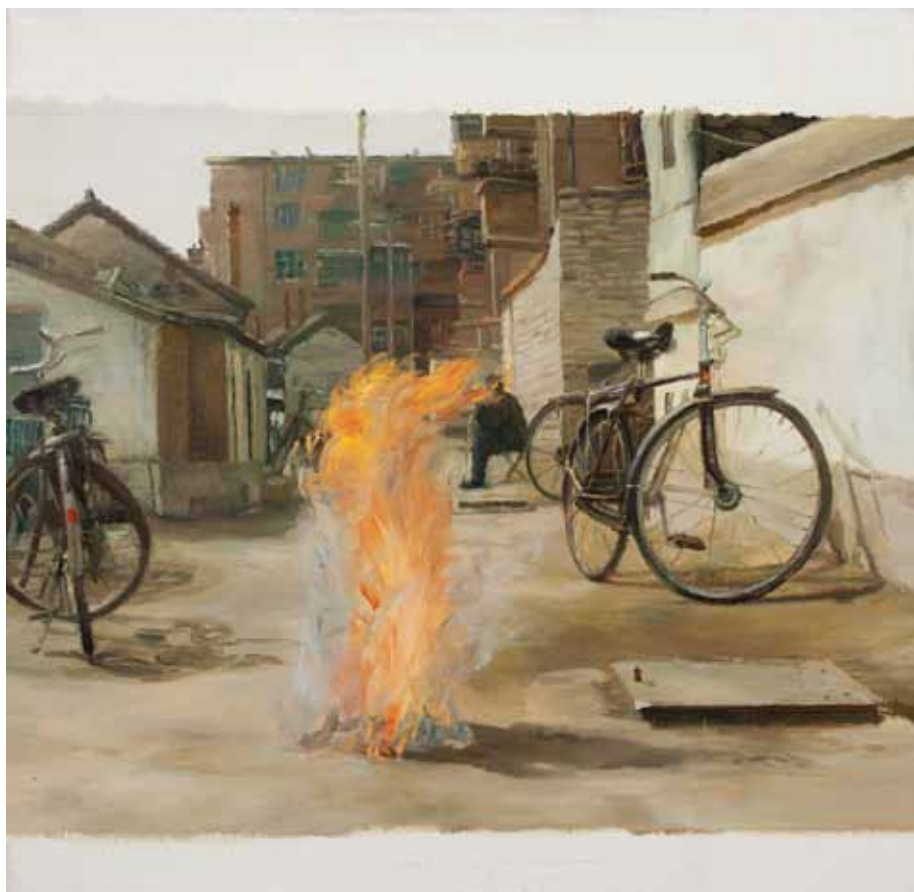
Chi Ming 迟明  
*Off the Floor*  
木地板  
Oil on Wooden Panel  
木板油画  
2012  
20 x 20 cm  
*Exhibited: CafaM Future, Report of Young Chinese Artists, Central Academy of Fine Art Museum, Beijing, 2012*  
展览: 2012 年 "CAFAM 未来展, 中国青年艺术生态报告", 中央美术学院美术馆, 北京

J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Bricks in Space 1 (opposite)*  
空间中的砖块习作 1 (对面)  
Charcoal on Paper  
木炭画在木板上  
2011  
75 x 106 cm  
*Collection of Mr and Mrs Ian Charles Stewart*





Chi Ming 迟明  
*Lovers*  
情侣  
Oil on Wooden Panel  
木板油画  
2011  
50 x 50 cm

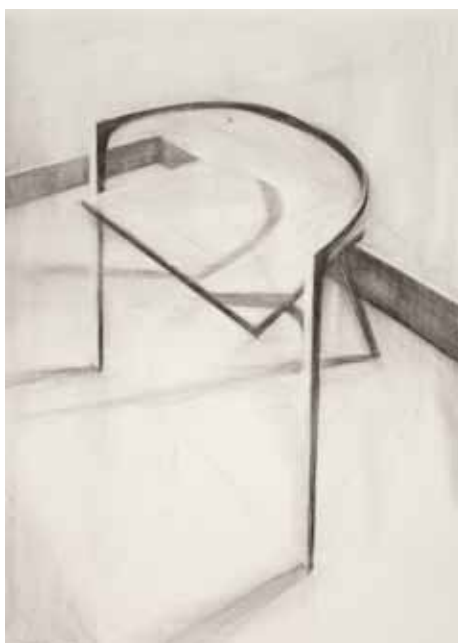


As Chinese philosopher and writer Lin Yutang (1895 - 1976) remarked in *Art of Living*, "man is, as it were, sandwiched between heaven and earth, between idealism and realism, between lofty thoughts and the baser passions," which could account for the inescapable fate of all man-made institutions to eventually cave-in because of the flaws inherited by its imperfect creator. Like the magical monkey we had enough power to knock on the gates of heaven but were not good enough, at least not on our own, to remain in the company of the immortals. Indeed none of the counter values, counter utopias or systems - not technology, not the new spiritualities - that man has come up with in the last few decades have proven worthy to uphold a new world order. The works of J S Tan and Chi Ming, in radically different ways, harbour the stirrings of a complex adaptive reaction to the decentering of our modern institutions. The honesty of their felt experience and their ability to explore dialectics in their art are a testimony of their talent as artists and as bold forerunners of a generation in transition.

Chi Ming 迟明  
*A Fire in the Winter*  
 冬天里的一把火  
 Oil on Canvas  
 布面油画  
 2011  
 50 x 50 cm

*Exhibited: CafaM Future, Report of Young Chinese Artists,  
 Central Academy of Fine Art Museum, Beijing, 2012*  
 展览: 2012 年 "CAFAM 未来展, 中国青年艺术生态报告",  
 中央美术学院美术馆, 北京

# INTERVIEWS



J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Chair in Space 3 (inset, above)*  
空间中的椅子习作 3 (上)  
Charcoal on Paper Mounted on Wooden Panel  
木炭画在木板上  
2011  
108 x 78 cm

## IN CONVERSATION WITH CHI MING

*Michelle Ho*

**Michelle Ho (MH):** You take the baton from a family of artists since the Mao era. The forces behind art have reshuffled a lot since then. Where do you see yourself standing?

**Chi Ming (CM):** In the early years, my grandfather was president of an art club, the equivalent of an advertising agency these days. He later became a “public artist”, producing the Mao portraits that were plastered over every factory and home during the Cultural Revolution. Art was not true to the artist's real life in the sense that it didn't reflect our living conditions and inner life. But it was true to our beliefs. We sincerely believed in an ideology and a savior. Politics defined life and art in a way that you can only compare with art in North Korea today. My dad caught the end of "the age of religion" with Mao as its godhead. In the 70s, he went on to paint cinema posters. I grew up in a world of old movie theatres and went on to study at the Central Academy of Fine Art. During that time, art had already become its own religion and each artist had become his own sun.

**MH:** But we all know flying too close to the sun is dangerous. In our post-secular age, do you think artists have done a good job with their newfound autonomy?

**CM:** Art in ancient times may have been singular, but it was also highly functional. Take for instance, ancient Greek and Egyptian art, Renaissance art and Buddhist murals. The collective spirit and body of work was very strong and each individual artist had less weight to bear. Mythology and religion defined the art of that time, but more importantly it was the childhood of humanity. Art was living, fresh and full. I think every style of art is “right” and its birth is justified by reason. It's the right language for its time. So abstract and conceptual art evolved as the right language for a highly-developed, capitalist world. But while we can learn a lot from the history of Western art, it's not our [Chinese] language. And even with the language artists are using now, I still sense it's somewhat distant from the reality of contemporary Chinese society. As for function, to some degree all art is fundamentally an expression of self. In itself, self-expression is not constructive unless it impacts society. And only time can be the judge of that.

**MH:** It looks like time has proven constrained environments can be as fertile as freedom for art. Or is “freedom” in contemporary China a mixed bag?

**CM:** The present generation in China is controlled not only by politics, but also money. All we have left is leisure. Everyone is caught up in his or her own trivial struggles. In this country and age, reality is fragmented, disorderly and cruel. Our generation lives in a time of peace, yet a time in which we have impoverished natural resources to enrich our material life. We're less able to endure hardship compared to previous generations, but more able compared to the next. We're more ready to accept new things than the previous generations, but likely less so than the next. Our present reality is insipid. We're very far removed from ideal. But something inside the human heart always leaves space for the ideal and even wonderful.

**MH:** Is that what you try to capture?

**CM:** I try to restore a true feeling. I capture those insipid fragments and memories in time and solidify them on the canvas. What “feels” real is not necessarily what is, and I constantly switch between the heart and the face of reality. To offer an accurate and vivid expression of the moment of truth for a community - that is pioneering. That is a breakthrough experience. I look for those moments expressed in the details of life and paint that narrative.

**MH:** You consider alienation to be your generation’s disease. It looks chronic. Can the artist shift that?

**CM:** I am skeptical even of the identity of artist. Taken too far, I believe it can consume you and, in the end, alienate you. Everything we create eventually alienates us. For instance, the cars, mobile phones, and all our legal and moral institutions that we invented to help and protect us, have ultimately alienated us. Confucius only invented a “way” for man to live with others, based on our nature. People obeyed and restrained their essential nature for a more “harmonious” existence and some cultivated it to get into public office. But then came the story of a son cutting off his own flesh to feed his starving father. Filial piety went too far by then. In the same way, art theory and art institutions eventually alienate art. It’s important to protect intuition and our animalistic nature.



**MH:** Would you say this tendency towards alienation is like a correction mechanism?

**CM:** Human desire does not know its limits. It’s the body, the animal, that stops you from eating to your death. A cat would never have that tendency. It knows when it’s full. God is fair. Humans are so smart that we could be dangerous, but he placed within us a mechanism a sort of insatiable desire for comfort, luxury and gluttony that is kind of self-destructive. You can see that in our culture of materialism.

**MH:** Is painting a way for you to keep that animal nature in check?

**CM:** I find peace in painting. If I don’t paint for a long time, I feel like my insides are being wrung.

**MH:** How has the combination of Mao, Confucius and market influenced what you do and why you do it?

**CM:** Discipline and work form most of my childhood memories. After school I went straight to my father to do my homework or study painting. I remember as a child I hardly played with other kids. My life revolved around a limited



circle of adults. Now that I think about it, I wonder why I didn't develop depression or autism. I understood that my parents loved me, but I couldn't understand why I was being treated like some sort of private property. As I grew into an adult, I slowly began to understand why. The mentality is deeply rooted in China, and for thousands of years, family violence became instilled in Confucian tradition. On top of that, my parents, born in the early days of the Republic, were shaped by their revolutionary education. My father was overwhelmingly concerned with what I painted. Because of my reclusive childhood, I found the process of painting to be a process of self-confirmation. I painted what was inside me and what I envisaged as a pure land, but I also wanted to get rid of the nightmare. So the paintings of my childhood were both an escape and a burden.

**MH:** Different cultures and power structures have come up with all sorts of way to justify violence. Does the violence that emerges in the current exhibition of your work exist as a sort of engagement in that dialogue?

**CM:** I think that aggression exists in all of us. It's just that our current society is so tempered and no longer tolerates it so we can only agree to disagree or learn to use other means of manipulation. But it will always be there. Sometimes I wonder if I'm violating that nature by obeying even the most trivial of social rules. I even find myself pausing at traffic lights, debating whether I should follow the rest of the Beijing drivers to run the red lights, or obey for the sake of obeying.

**MH:** You wed violence and sex often in your work.

**CM:** Sex and the human body is miraculous and mysterious. It will always remain obscure. I suspect that behind our sexual drive, our violence and our creativity is the same powerful, but faceless life force. I heard about an experiment once by scientists who believed that a certain part of the brain was responsible for our aggression. They contemplated destroying it, but then realised that that would mean the end of humanity's creative function.

**MH:** What's next for you?

**CM:** Draw. I'd like to draw. In the end, we all do what we want to do most.

Chi Ming 迟明  
*Whereabouts of Harm* (opposite)  
去向何妨 (对面)  
Oil on Wooden Panel  
木板油画  
2012  
20 x 31 cm

## IN CONVERSATION WITH J S TAN

*Michelle Ho*

**Michelle Ho (MH):** Your previous figurative works have been interpreted as a way by which you exercised control over dogma and oppressive power structures. Obviously there are no people in geometry! Is the new phase a way to take everyone, including yourself, out of the picture and the creative process too?

**J S Tan (JST):** This body of work is a different investigation. I wanted to explore space formally, almost scientifically. Part of my own stylistic decisions seeps through and is reflected in the work, for instance the cage-like structures, the humour of the bow-tie, the finish on the paper. But to a large extent these are just a product of how I know how to work. I guess in the previous body of work I was mainly hung up by the whole religion thing amongst other social stuff.

**MH:** How do you work?

**JST:** Here I worked in an almost scientific manner - putting down lines, marks and stepping back to see if it works and then iterating until it comes together.

I don't really think of art as a process. That to me sounds more like craft. Nor is it a lifestyle, as many artists would like to romanticize it to be. Instead, art is an intellectual endeavor, a sparring of ideas, an aesthetic philosophy. It is not a way of living. Maybe more like a way thinking. Art for me is more like a response.

**MH:** The commodisation and diversification of the artist - artist-as-entrepreneur, artist-as-brand name - is a trend that some artists have taken up more readily than others. How has it influenced you?

**JST:** I do many things, many of which people would not classify as "art". However, the fundamental motivator behind these other endeavors is the idea of art and its social function in the 21st Century. For example, it is because of art that I am going to graduate with a degree in computer science. It is because of art (fine art) that I've entered the world of design and craft. It is because of art that I have made video games. Thinking about art, its social function, how modernism has changed it and what it means to be making art in the 21st Century has led me many different places. Including making furniture! In the end, I think there are always those who work within the existing definition of art (use art explicitly) and those who, less in the mainstream, challenge the existing paradigms of art (use art implicitly).

**MH:** What are some of the paradigms you're challenging?

**JST:** For example, when I went to see the Carsten Holler show in the New Museum (New York) I thought that the transformation of the gallery space was creative and intelligent in making people rethink how the gallery space functioned. In response to the show, my friend and I created a set of installations that transformed the gallery space it was exhibited in into a playground. We made a slide and a set of swings. However, unlike the Carsten Holler show where a functional slide went through three floors of the New Museum, our slide and swings were interactive but at the

same time nonfunctional (the slide sits at too low an angle for people to slide, and the swings are set against a wall) This kept them within the realm of "gallery object", "do not touch me object". The intention was for these installation objects (swing and slide) to strike a balance between interaction (like playground equipment) whilst keeping them in the static intellectual environment of the gallery – almost as if the objects themselves were confused by its very role as objects. It provides a false functionality - the object doubts itself.

**MH:** How has technology changed your practice?

**JST:** We're the first generation to have really grown up with technology. Especially children of the late 80s onwards. We grew up with the internet, with youtube, with photoshop. It would be almost more strange to pick up a pencil and start doodling than it would be to be to chop up videos to remix, or to make collages on photoshop. I think, more natural than most things – than any specific medium, or any specific process – is our ability to learn and adapt. So having grown up with technology, it is almost "natural" to be using technology in our creative processes. Having grown up with technology, we have become most sensitive and receptive of digital things. With just the layout or colors of a website, we can make out the type of website it is, what kind of production went into the making of it, what kind of service/information they are providing. Our eyes can pick out a photoshop job immediately. Even when chatting online, we can create and identify meaning based on syntactical choices – the "LOL", the emoticons. And naturally, with this new vocabulary, we can relate to new aesthetics – with remix culture, memes etc. We not only make differently, but we consume differently, we distribute differently. It's all about the internet.

**MH:** You mentioned that you've taken a fancy towards Tom Sachs' Mission to Mars.

**JST:** Yes. It's very funny I think. But it also makes me think about the influence that capitalism has had on today's mode of artistic production and how it's the collective activity of all the actors (the artist, the assistants, the institution, the public and commentators) around the art object that transform its meaning."

**MH:** The way a digital child experiences and interacts with the world has thrown the institution on its head. What do you think is the right "exhibition space" for digital art?

**JST:** The Internet.

You get some artists today whose work speaks, in many ways, the language of the digital generation, the post Photoshop world. Yet the overarching traditions, such as working on canvas, work for the gallery, work that can be viewed as an object, work that is optimal for one time-experiences, work that is better seen in person than on a screen, are from a previous era. There seems to be something off between the way the work is consumed and the visual language that is used.

**MH:** Has playing the fields of both fine art and technology made you hyper-conscious of the role of the artist in the Millennial generation?

**JST:** The thing is, the role of the artist has changed so much over time. Especially during modernism, where each subsequent generation of artists redefined art and the role of the artist. However, the general consensus for the post-modern art world is that none of the modern thinkers were wrong. That means all of the ways in which the modern artists had redefined themselves are in fact valid.

I think the word art is better used to describe the tendencies of a specific type of work. And what's better than the industry to define what these tendencies are? On the other hand, the post-modern adds another dimension of complexity to the problem. Its diversity really messes up spotting these "tendencies". But the one thing I believe is that the artist is a social being - connecting to society, making for society and - inherent in the existence of his work, critiquing society.

**MH:** If you were an artwork which one would you be?

**JST:** Michelangelo's David or Gilbert Stuart's "The Anthenaeum" - because the rest is still unwritten.

J S Tan 陈建升  
*Menhirs*  
石柱  
Charcoal on Paper  
木炭画  
2011  
250 x 350 cm approx.







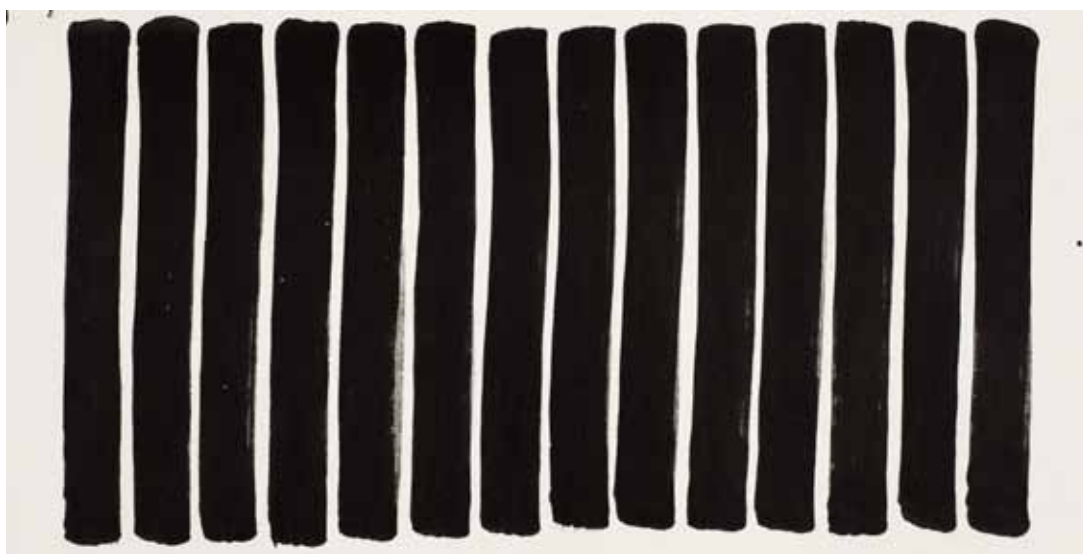
## FURTHER CATALOGUE OF WORKS



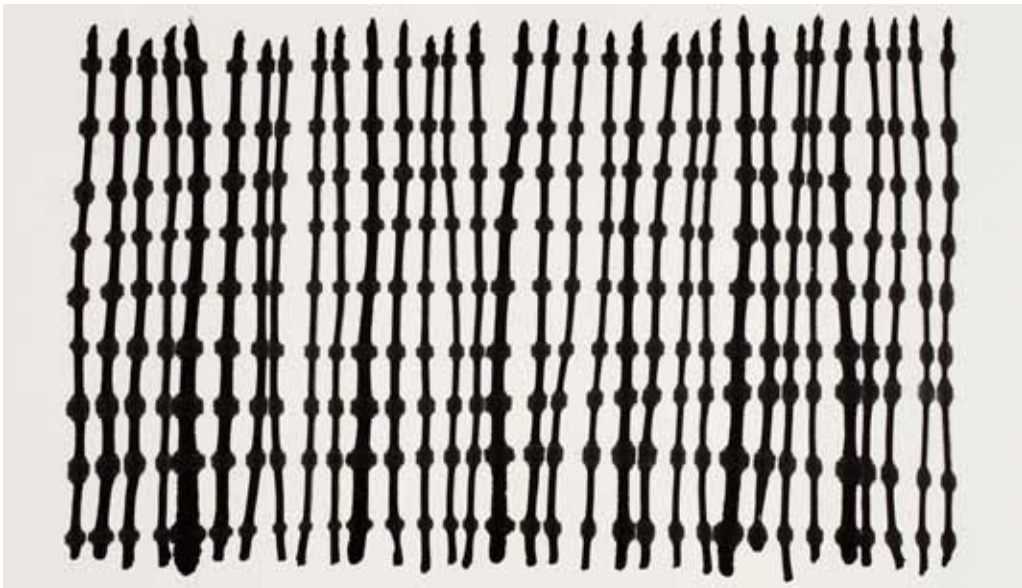
J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Chair in Space 1*  
空间中的椅子习作 1  
Charcoal on Paper Mounted on Wooden Panel  
木炭画在木板上  
2011  
108 x 78 cm



Chi Ming 迟明  
*Private World III*  
 私密之三  
 Oil on Wooden Panel  
 木板油画  
 2011  
 50 x 50 cm



J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Lines 9*  
 线条习作 9  
 Ink on Chinese Rice Paper, Mounted on Wooden Panel  
 中国水墨宣纸木板  
 2011  
 68.5 x 134 cm







Chi Ming 迟明  
*Ballet Dream I*  
 芭蕾舞之一  
 Oil on Canvas  
 布面油画  
 2012  
 60 x 60 cm

J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Lines 12 (opposite, top)*  
 线条习作 12 (对面, 上)  
 Ink on Chinese Rice Paper Mounted on Wooden Panel  
 中国水墨宣纸木板  
 2011  
 68 x 134 cm

Chi Ming 迟明  
*Sunflower (opposite)*  
 向日葵 (对面)  
 Oil on Wooden Panel  
 木板油画  
 2012  
 20 x 20 cm



Chi Ming 迟明

*Disappearing*

消逝

Oil on Wooden Panel

木板油画

2011

20 x 20 cm

*Exhibited: CafaM Future, Report of Young Chinese Artists,  
Central Academy of Fine Art Museum, Beijing, 2012*

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Chi Ming 迟明

*Past Lovers*

往日情侣

Oil on Wooden Panel

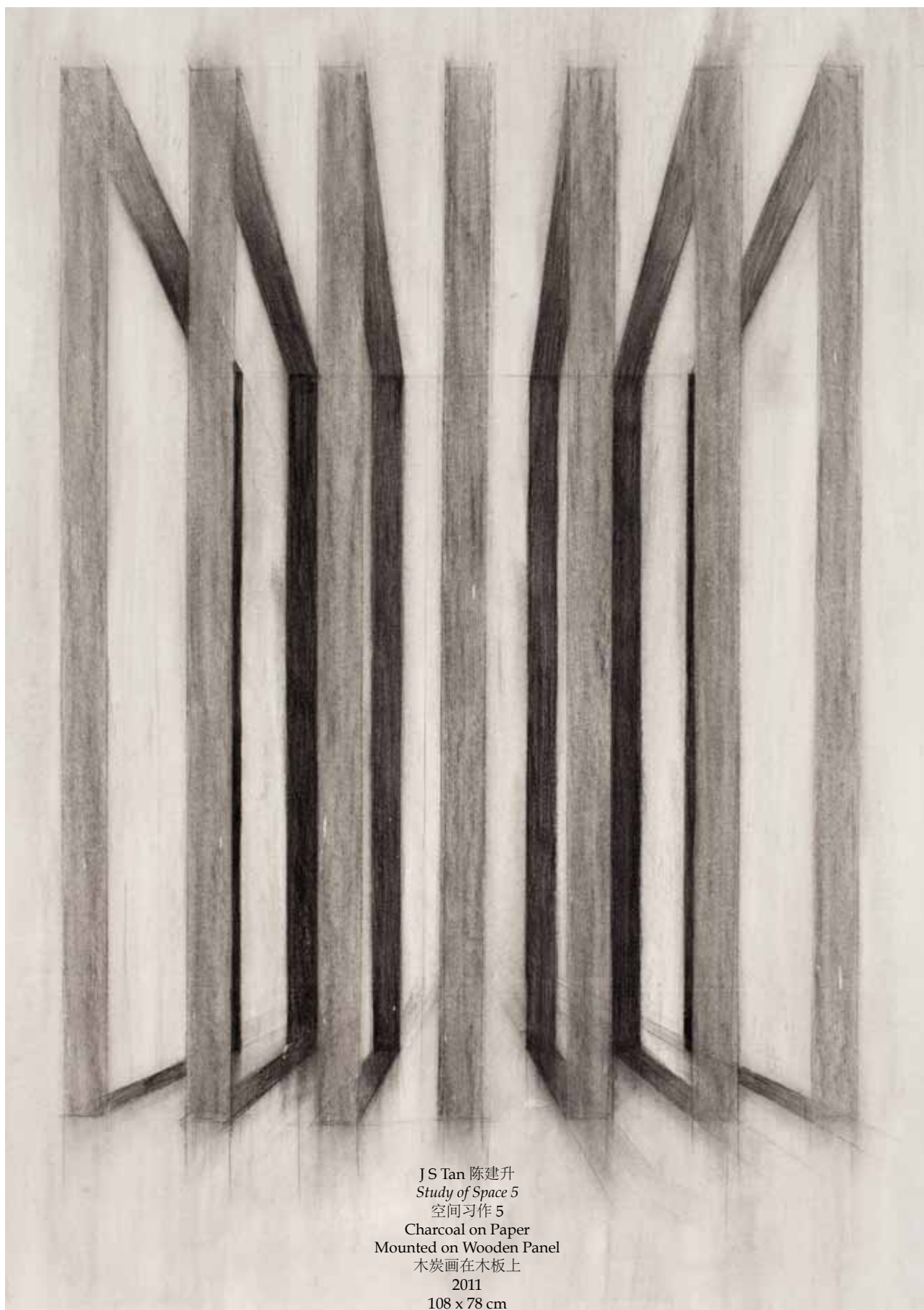
木板油画

2011

20 x 20 cm

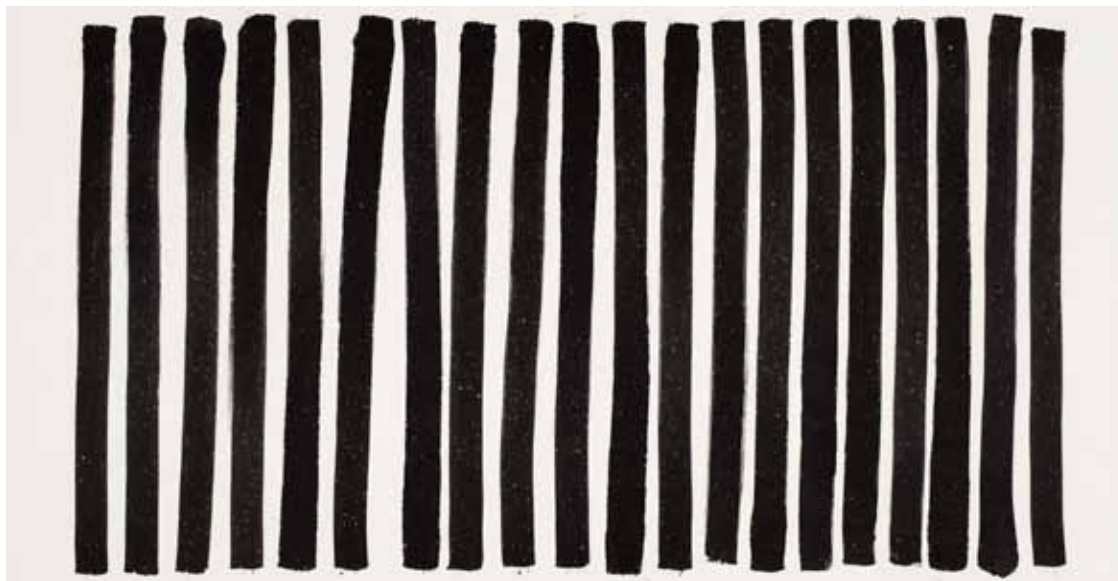
*Exhibited & Published: Face, Portraiture Group Exhibition,  
Minsheng Bank Art Museum, Shanghai*

展览: 2012 年 "开放的肖像", 肖像画群展,  
民生现代美术馆, 上海



J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Space 5*  
空间习作 5  
Charcoal on Paper  
Mounted on Wooden Panel  
木炭画在木板上  
2011  
108 x 78 cm





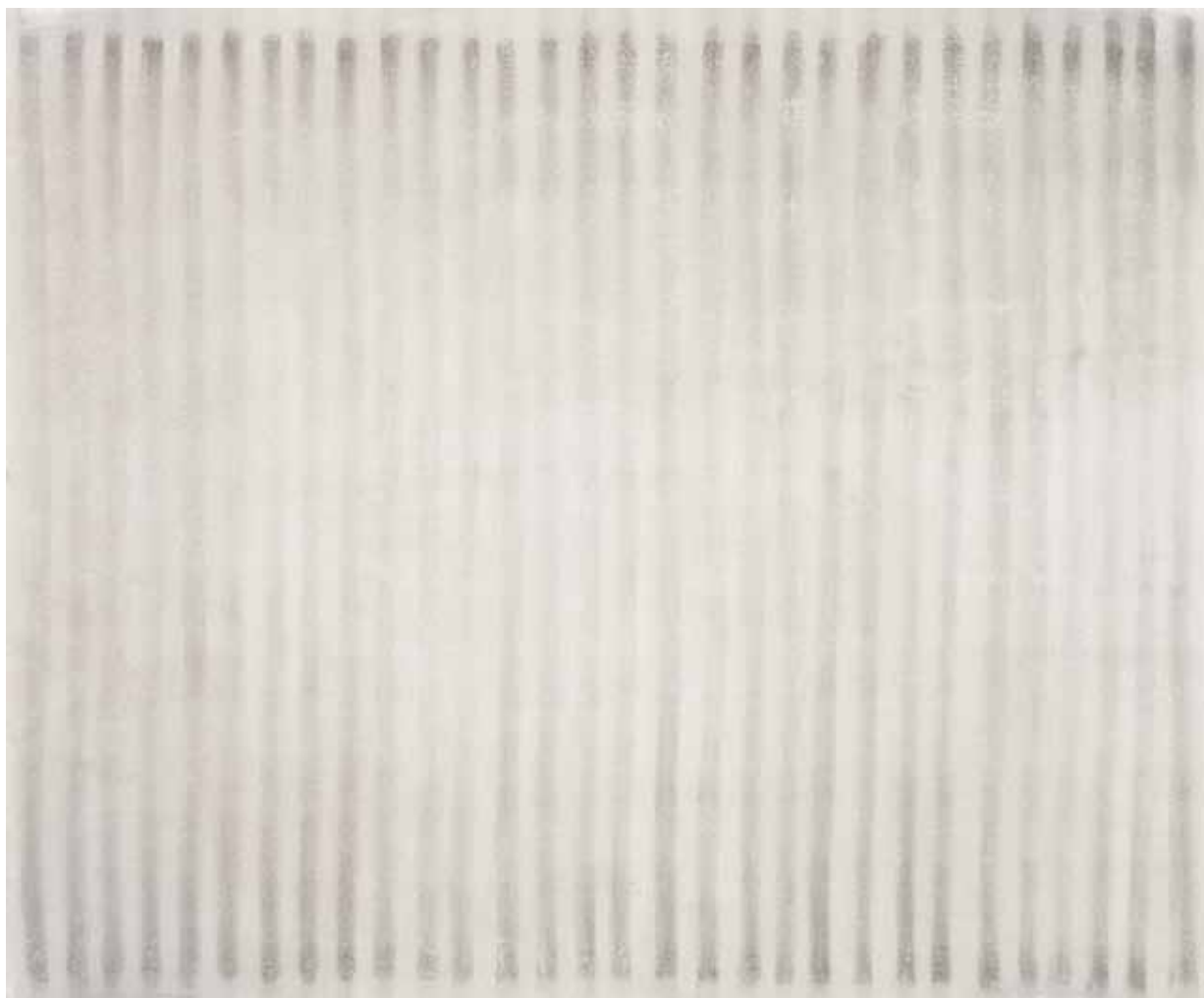
Chi Ming 迟明  
*Friendship II*  
 友谊 II  
 Oil on Wooden Panel,  
 Framed  
 木板油画  
 2010  
 50 x 40 cm

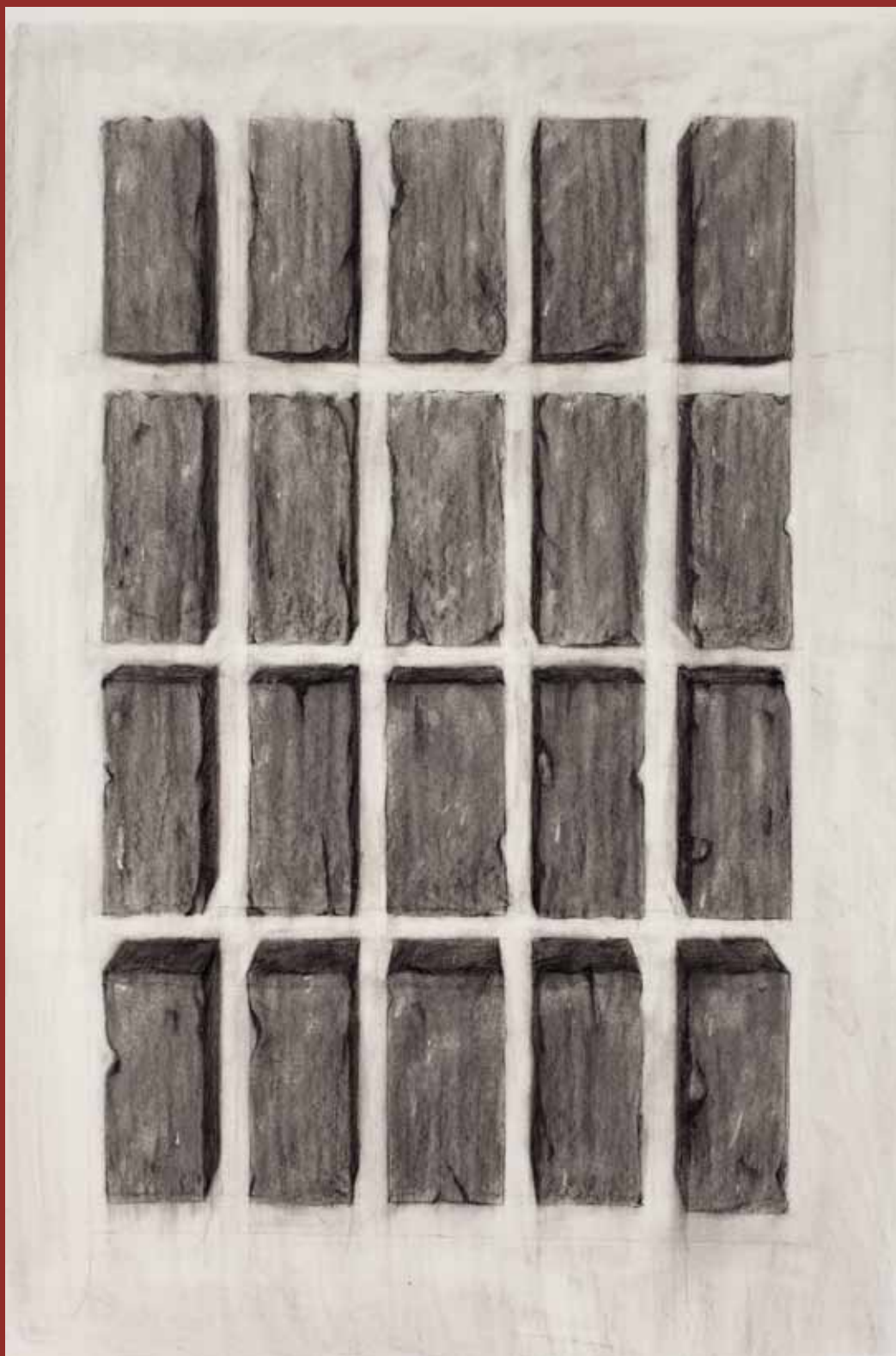
J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Lines 10 & 11 (top and opposite)*  
 线条习作 10 和 11 (上和对面)  
 Ink on Chinese Rice Paper and Charcoal on Paper, Mounted on Wooden Panel  
 中国水墨宣纸木板 - 木炭画在木板上  
 2011  
 68 x 134 cm and 58 x 70 cm, respectively



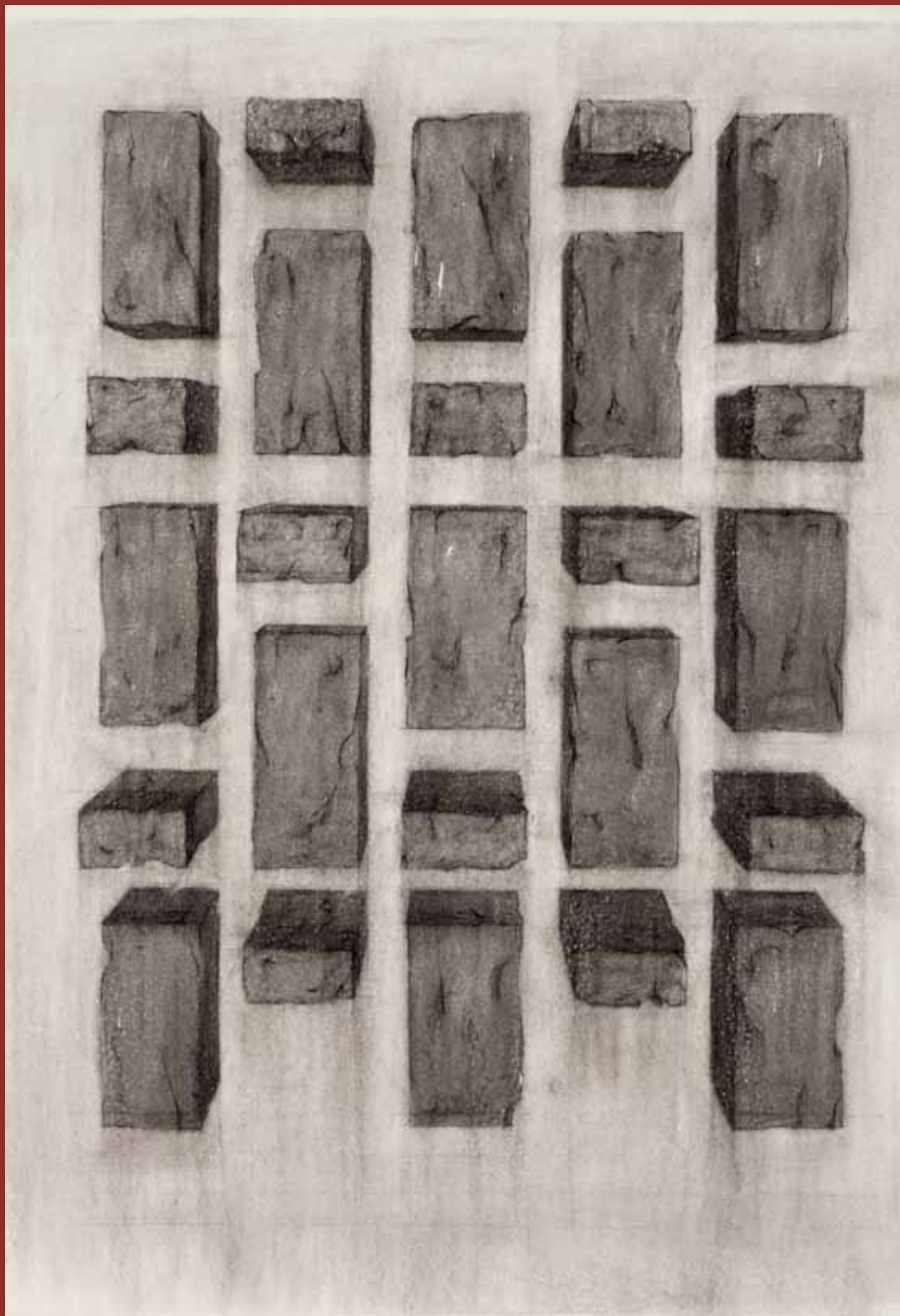


Chi Ming 迟明  
*Private World VI*  
 私密之六  
 Oil on Wooden Panel,  
 Framed  
 木板油画  
 2011  
 50 x 50 cm





J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Bricks in Space 2*  
空间中的砖块习作 2  
Charcoal on Paper Mounted on Wooden Panel  
木炭画在木板上  
2011  
108 x 78 cm



JS Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Bricks in Space 3*  
空间中的砖块习作 3  
Charcoal on Paper Mounted on Wooden Panel  
木炭画在木板上  
2011  
108 x 78 cm





Chi Ming 迟明  
*Ballet Dream II*  
芭蕾舞之二  
Oil on Canvas  
布面油画  
2012  
80 cm D

*Exhibited: CafaM Future, Report of Young Chinese Artists,  
Central Academy of Fine Art Museum, Beijing, 2012*  
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Chi Ming 迟明  
*Gates Opened*  
 城门开  
 Oil on Wooden Panel  
 木板油画  
 2012  
 40 x 40 cm

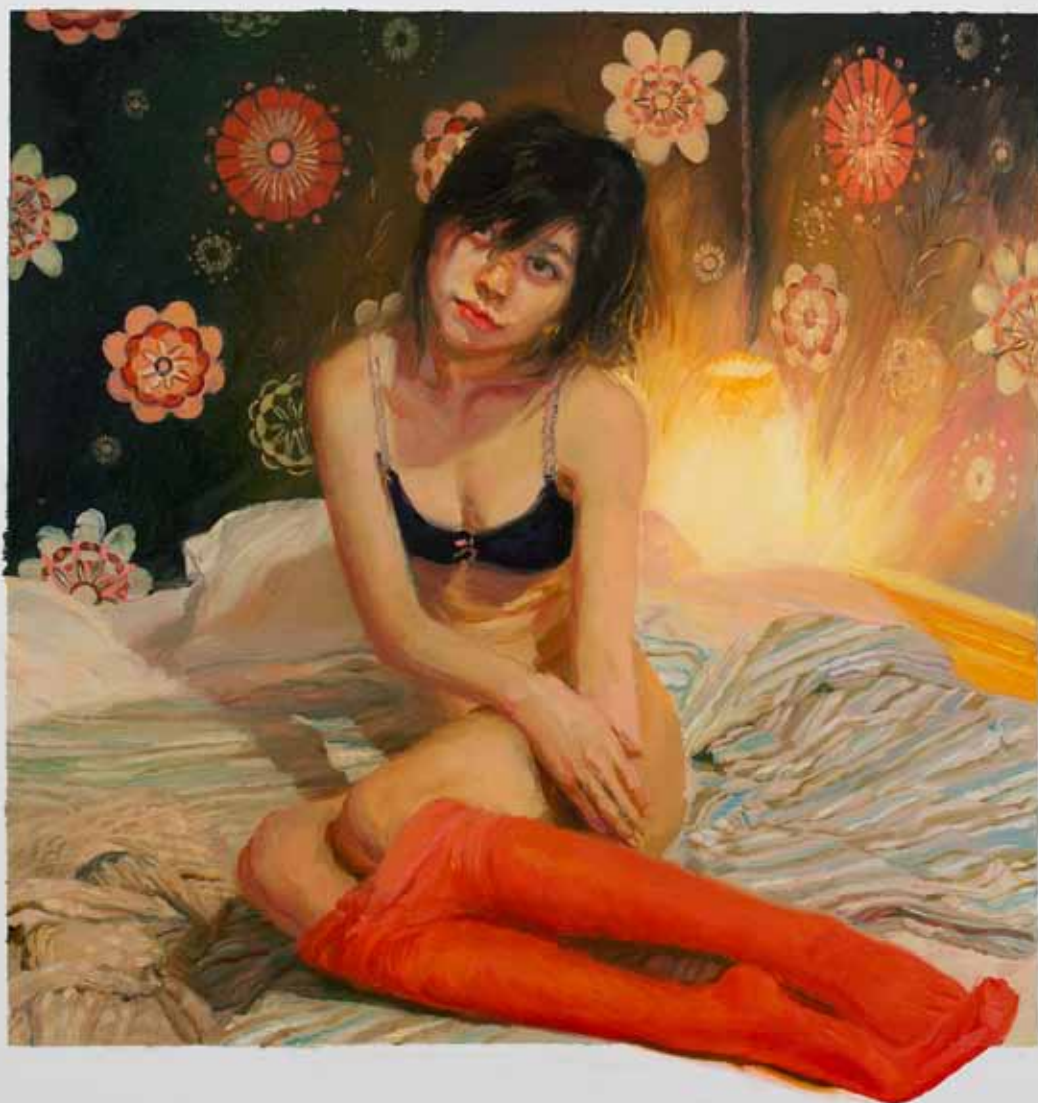


Chi Ming 迟明  
*Early Summer*  
 初夏  
 Acrylic and Pencil on Paper  
 纸上丙烯, 铅笔  
 2012  
 25 x 25 cm



Chi Ming 迟明  
*Red Stocking*  
 丝袜红  
 Acrylic and Pencil on Paper, Framed  
 纸上丙烯, 铅笔  
 2012  
 20 x 20 cm

Chi Ming 迟明  
*My Muse*  
 大气  
 Oil on Wooden Panel  
 木板油画  
 2011  
 20 x 20 cm



Chi Ming 迟明

*Flower*

花花

Oil on Canvas

布面油画

2012

50 x 50 cm

*Exhibited: CafaM Future, Report of Young Chinese Artists,  
Central Academy of Fine Art Museum, Beijing, 2012*

展览：2012 年“CAFAM 未来展，中国青年艺术生态  
报告”，中央美术学院美术馆，北京

Chi Ming 迟明

*Idle (opposite, top)*  
无所事事（对面，上）

Oil on Wooden Panel

木板油画

2011

60 x 60 cm





Chi Ming 迟明  
*The Warm Glow*  
暖光  
Oil on Canvas  
布面油画  
2012  
80 x 80 cm





Chi Ming 迟明  
*Afterglow*  
 余晖  
 Oil on Wooden Panel  
 木板油画  
 2012  
 20 x 20 cm  
 Exhibited: *Cafam Future, Report of Young Chinese Artists*,  
*Central Academy of Fine Art Museum, Beijing, 2012*  
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 中央美术学院美术馆，北京

Chi Ming 迟明  
*Dry and Hot (below)*  
 燥热的空气（下）  
 Acrylic on Paper  
 纸上丙烯  
 2012  
 36 x 51 cm

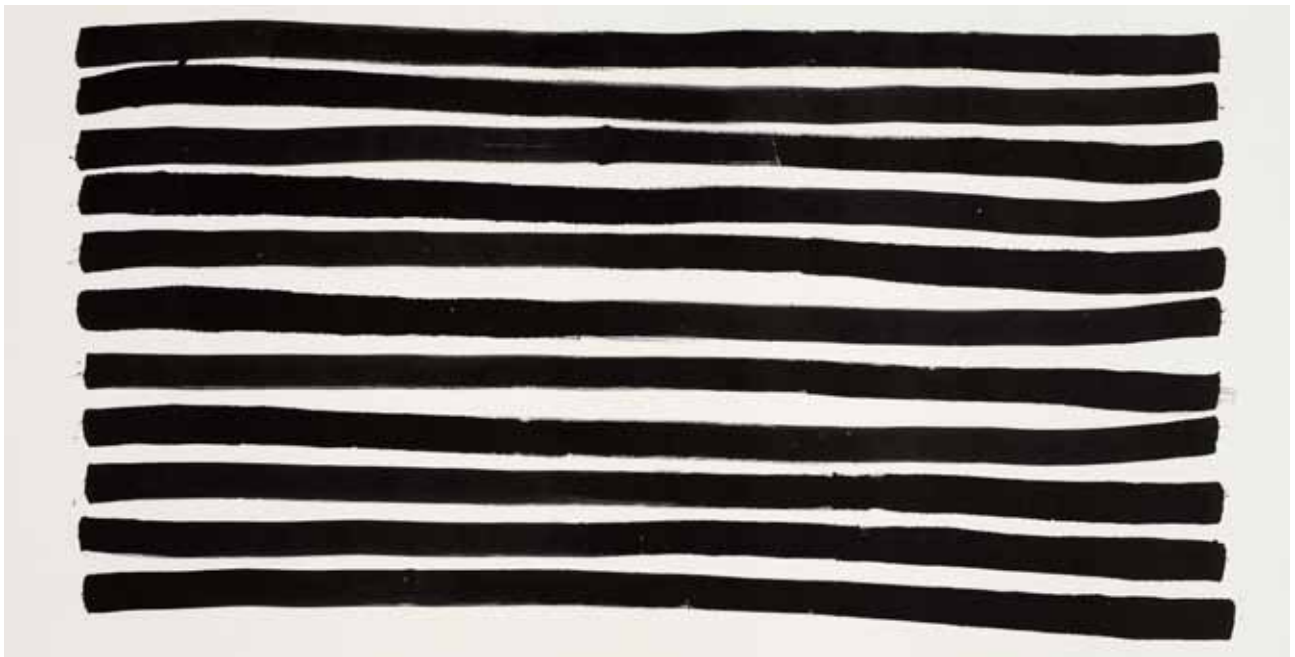




Chi Ming 迟明  
*The Moment*  
 瞬间  
 Oil on Wooden Panel  
 木板油画  
 2012  
 20 x 20 cm



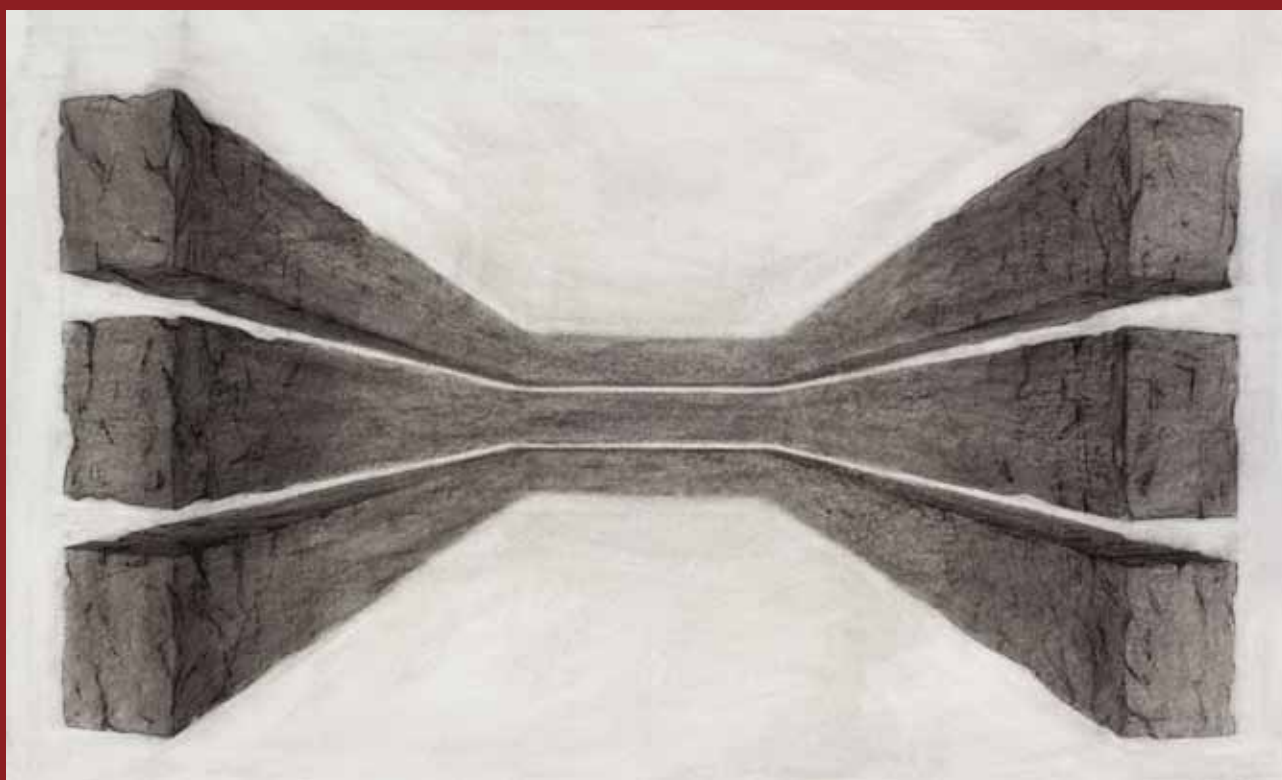
Chi Ming 迟明  
*White Skirt*  
 白裙子  
 Oil on Wooden Panel  
 木板油画  
 2012  
 20 x 20 cm



J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Lines 13*  
 线条习作 13  
 Ink on Chinese Rice Paper  
 Mounted on Wooden Panel  
 中国水墨宣纸木板  
 2011  
 68 x 134 cm

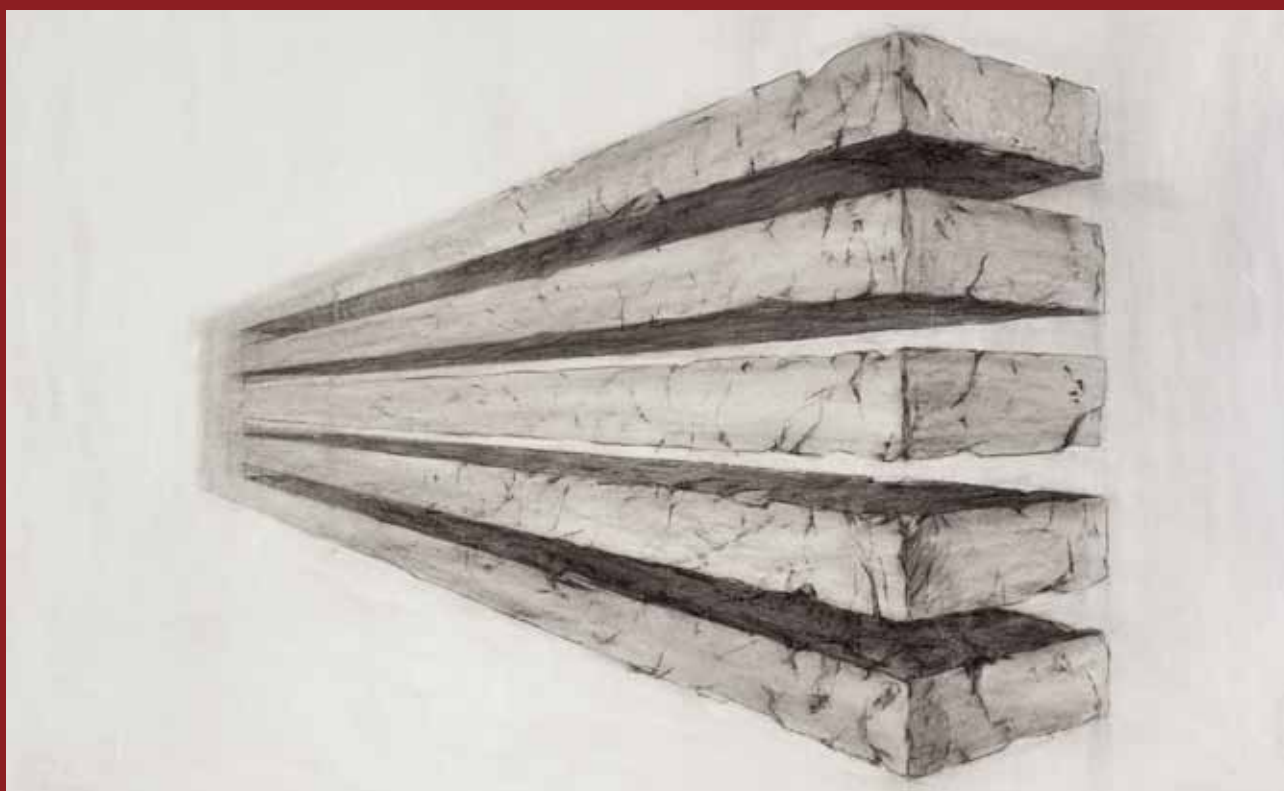


Chi Ming 迟明  
*Red Pillow*  
 红抱枕  
 Oil on Canvas  
 布面油画  
 2012  
 80 cm D



JS Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Bricks in Space 5*  
空间中的砖块习作 5  
Charcoal on Paper  
木炭画在木板上  
2011  
75 x 107 cm  
*Atkins & Ai Gallery Collection*





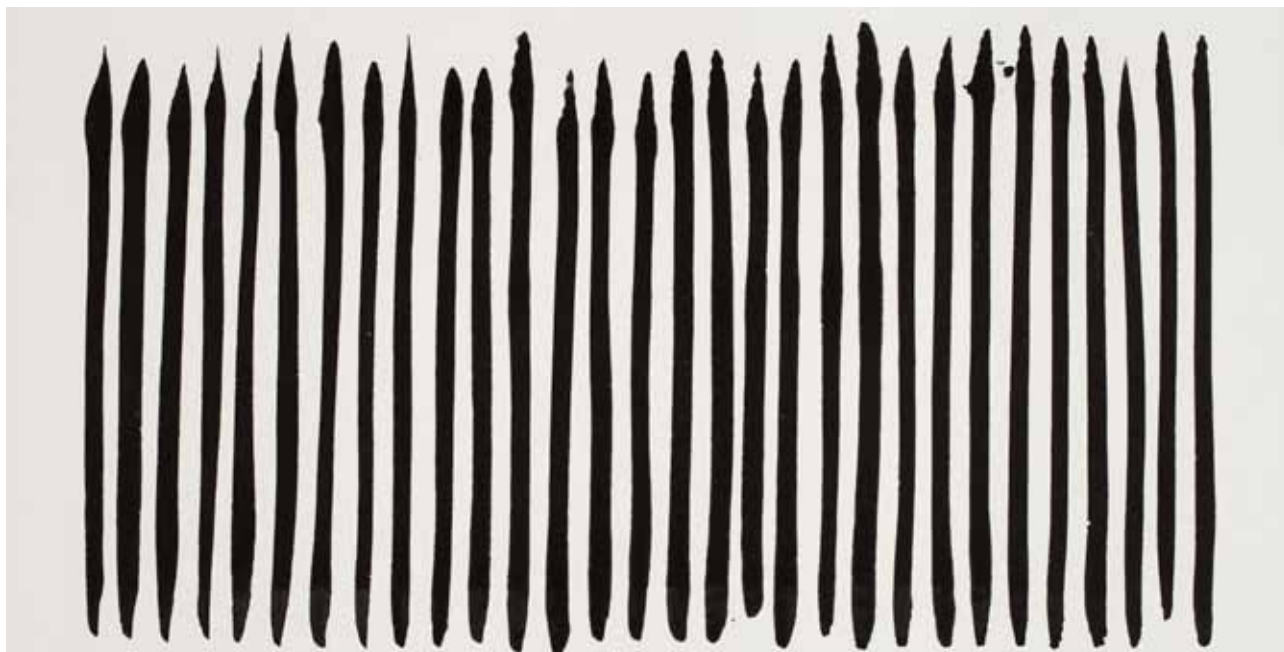
JS Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Bricks in Space 4*  
空间中的砖块习作 4  
Charcoal on Paper  
木炭画在木板上  
2011  
76 x 106 cm



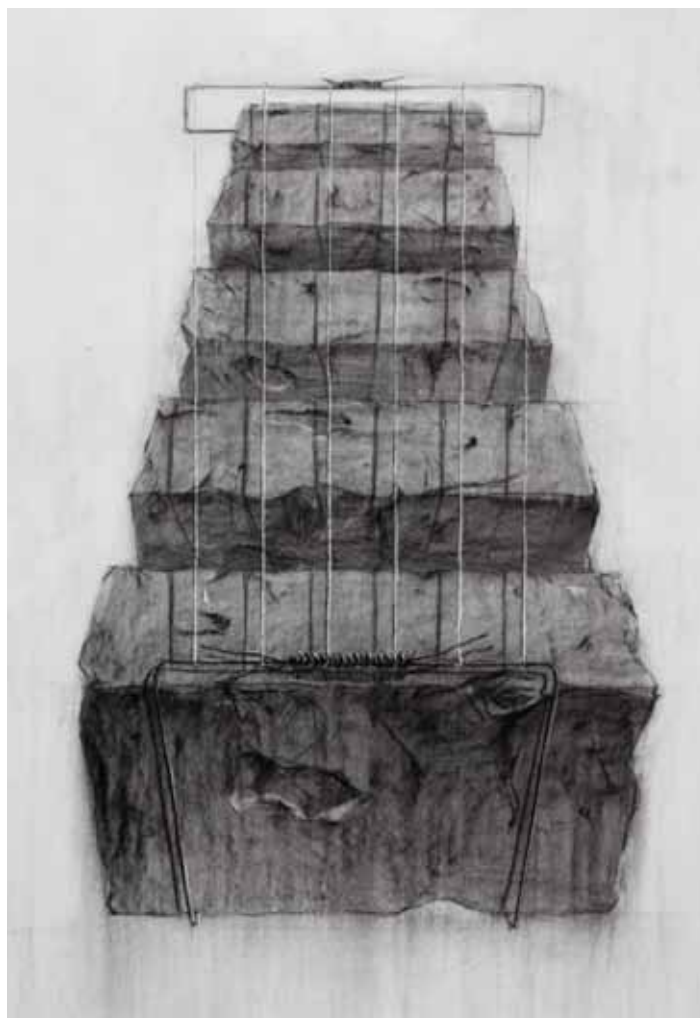
Chi Ming 迟明  
*An Old Church to be Demolished*  
 待拆的基督堂  
 Oil on Wooden Panel  
 木板油画  
 2012  
 20 x 20 cm



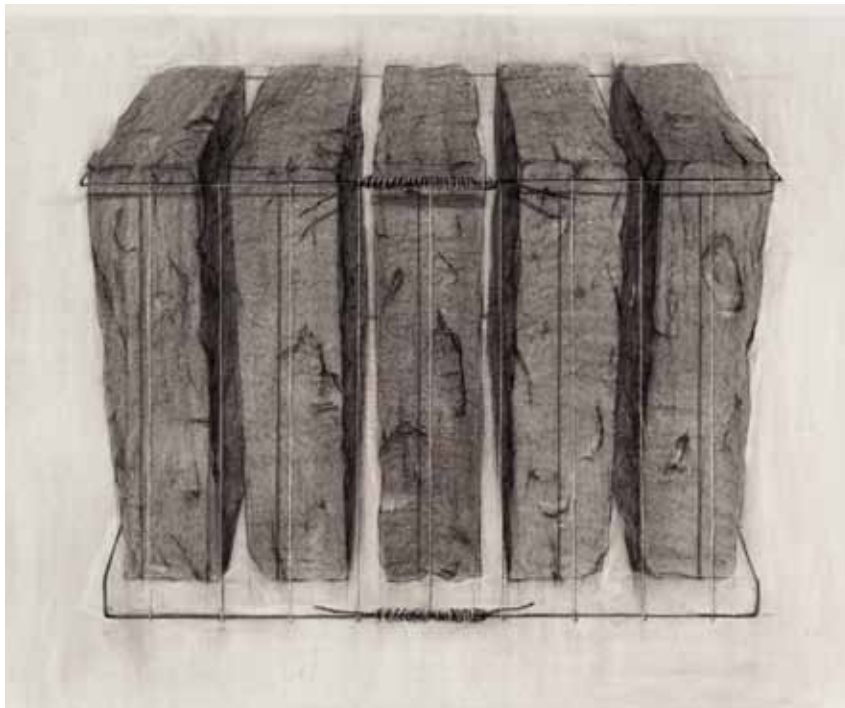
Chi Ming 迟明  
*The Site for the New City Center*  
 市中心  
 Oil on Wooden Panel  
 木板油画  
 2012  
 20 x 20 cm



J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Lines 8*  
 线条习作 8  
 Ink on Chinese Rice Paper  
 Mounted on Wooden  
 Panel  
 中国水墨宣纸木板  
 2011  
 68 x 134 cm



J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Bricks in Space 6*  
 空间中的砖块习作 6  
 Charcoal on Paper  
 Mounted on Wooden Panel  
 木炭画在木板上  
 2011  
 75 x 108 cm



J S Tan 陈建升  
*Study of Bricks in Space 7*  
 空间中的砖块习作 7  
 Charcoal on Paper  
 Mounted on Wooden Panel  
 木炭画在木板上  
 2011  
 77 x 108 cm



Chi Ming 迟明  
*Longing for Childhood*  
 花季不在  
 Oil on Canvas  
 布面油画  
 2012  
 50 x 50 cm  
 Central Academy of Fine Art Museum  
 Collection, Beijing  
 中央美术学院美术馆画册, 北京





Chi Ming 迟明  
*Playing Adult*  
小大人

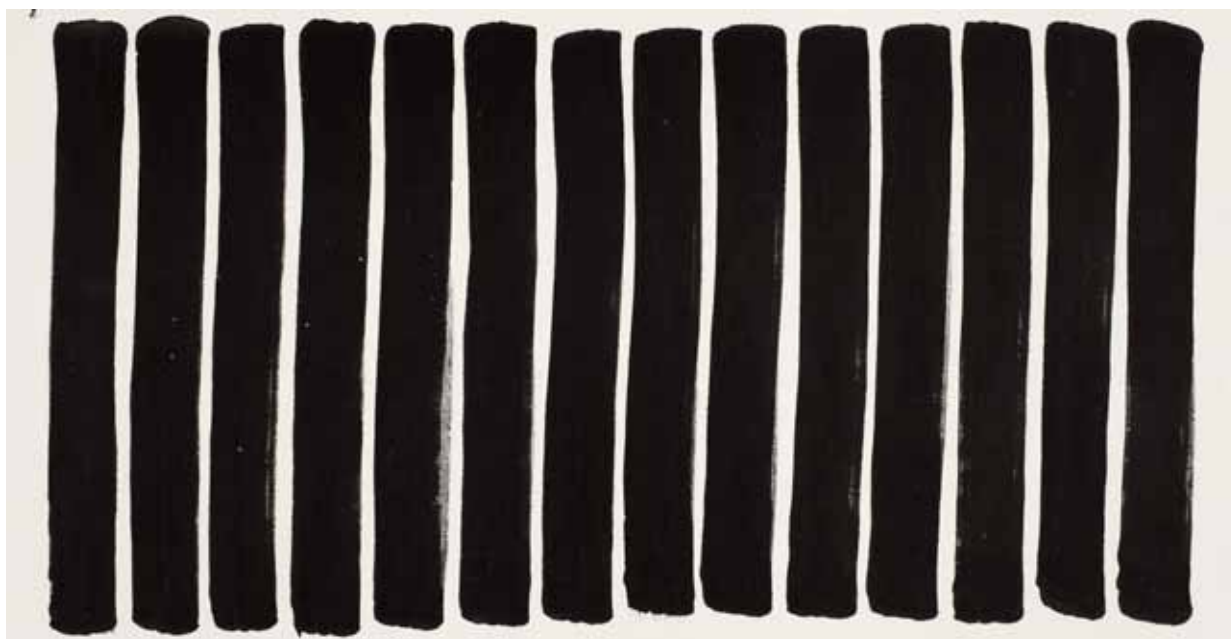
Oil on Canvas  
布面油画  
2012

80 x 80 cm

Central Academy of Fine Art Museum

Collection, Beijing

中央美术学院美术馆画册, 北京



J S Tan 陈建升

*Study of Lines 12*

线条习作 12

Ink on Chinese Rice Paper Mounted on Wooden Panel

中国水墨宣纸木板

2011

67 x 134 cm

## CATALOGUE ESSAY

Michelle Ho

"The increase of destructiveness goes side by side with the increase of human skill, for like the Monkey with magical powers, we are able to walk upon the clouds and turn somersaults in the air, to pull monkey hair out of our monkey legs and transform them into little monkeys to harass the enemy, to knock at the very gates of Heaven, brush the Heavenly Gate Keeper brusquely aside and demand a place in the company of the gods".

- *The Art of Living*, Lin Yutang

Some time ago, Carl Jung declared that "our fearsome gods have changed their names - they now rhyme with -ism." Like the Monkey with magical powers in *Journey to the West*, we swept aside all heavenly authority and erected our great institutions of democracy, capitalism and science. Their heavenly hosts, including cynicism, secularisation, disenchantment and skepticism followed soon after. But lately, the world has started to grow tired of these -isms. And the rise of China, likened to some irrational and uncontrollable force to the West with its millennia-old culture of realism and a philosophy more content with marveling at, rather than demystifying, every working of the universe, has been uncannily timely. For while the revolution of radical rationalization is still unfolding, a newfound mystification with technology and a more primordial, spiritual state of being is rearing its head. And in the works of two talented young artists Chi Ming and J S Tan are the ominous stirrings of this new intersection between disenchantment and a counterculture of re-enchantment.

Shandong-born artist Chi Ming looks on his generation with a complex attitude. Through round, Puyi-esque glasses, he sees a cold reality riddled with the quasi-mythical. His birthplace, Yantai City, today a major industrial hub, was where the emperor Qin Shi Huang once searched for the elixir of immortality. His grandfather was a painter whose life and labour revolved around the sacred aura of Mao Zedong, while his father painted cinematic posters propagating the Chairman's messaging. From such roots, Chi Ming moved to Beijing in 2001 to study at the Central Academy of Fine Arts. At that time Chi's creative environment was dominated by the prolific painter and professor Liu Xiaodong, whose fluid and narrative style of realism rode against the wave of Political Pop and Cynical Realism. Chi went on to forge his own brand of realism, pursuing emotional honesty over innovation for innovation's sake and a philosophy of mankind as "earth-bound".

Whereas his grandfather painted Mao portraits during the Cultural Revolution and his father caught the end of the "religion" of Mao, Chi Ming questions the effects of self as religion for his own generation. The end of Mao marked the end of an era of heroism and dignity owing to an intimate alliance among men united under a single vision (*Friendship I*, illustrated page 9, is in stark contrast to *Friendship II*, page 40). For Chi Ming, China's most rapid era of economic change delivered one form of freedom but a new imprisonment under materialism and cultural dissipation. Born without heroes or ideals, the only suitable posture for the Chinese youth of the last two decades seems to have a jaded acceptance towards a fragmented and materialistic reality. It's a social condition aptly captured in *Gates Opened* (page 45), an ironically grandiose title for the scene of a bedroom with an unreachable window and lamp shining on an empty bed.

The urge for freedom takes shape in Chi Ming's works as a defiance of accepted social norms, distorted perspectives and in some cases, a sublimation of reality, as Chi dances between Realism, Surrealism and Romanticism. A heady dose of the latter appears in *Ballet Dream II* (page 44), where Chi's muse and girlfriend is depicted as a stone-faced Degasian ballerina; its inversion manifests as she appears in a blonde wig in the foreboding *Black Skies* (page 13) and *KTV* (cover), thereby offering a temporary release by allowing Chi to subvert the identities of his subject. As he looks for the surreal in life (*A Fire in the Winter*, page 25) or fashions it (*Whereabouts of Harm*, page 28), Chi captures the longings

for a narrative arc. He also continuously seeks ideals amongst China's Post-80s generation, one controlled by politics and money and caged inside its own superficial freedom. The absent figures in *Past Lovers* (page 38), for instance, create a sacred zone in the middle of reality protected from decay and disenchantment. Elsewhere, Chi Ming's depiction of intense, almost intoxicating interior spaces, as exemplified in his *Ballet Dream* series, appear illuminated like a stage set with the players about to enter. The parallel of reality to theatricality in Chi Ming's body of works reveals a desire to treat life with the same hallowed reverence that directors and actors reserve for the stage.

Producing his works from a modest studio, where neighbours' laundry line the corridors and stray cats roam the communal grounds, Chi brings to life an autobiographical but powerfully representative world with expressionistic detail and a great sensitivity to palette. By depicting his subjects as cut-off figures, erased faces and seemingly unfinished spaces, Chi hints at an alternative reality and more vital force that evades our grasp. But whereas in *Past Lovers* that space represents a bygone purity, the motifs of sexual sadism in *Midsummer* (title page) and *Chain* (opposite), vanity and decay in *A Chinese Book* (page 5) and *Longing for Childhood* (page 56), and encroaching perspectival layers in *Ballet Dream I* (page 37) and *Dry and Hot* (page 49) suggest that that vital force may be essentially destructive and uncontrollable. Indeed, in conversation with Chi Ming, he questions whether the force behind man's heroism, his creativity and violence may well be one and the same.

The "life force" has indeed appeared before. It has been named Eros, Thanatos, and Bacchus in the West. Each time it seduced with a reaffirmation of life but ultimately reeled into chaos. In the East, as Chi Ming himself has alluded, the Bushido code of the Samurai offered a way to harness the fierce spirit of man under well-defined tenants of conduct and wisdom. But it was only temporary at best. Confucianism likewise may have underpinned Chinese civilization for millennia but was gradually taken to justify violence in private spheres. In *After School* (page 8) the scene surrounding the self-portrait of a fearful-looking young Chi Ming is charming, comely and as tactile as the reams of paper upon which the young ward of a disciplinarian father is dutifully practicing his calligraphy. And despite or because of, his first-hand familiarity with physical harshness, Chi often depicts the aesthetic and the sensual or a sense of looming destruction, no matter how quotidian the scene. If re-engagement with man's pre-civilisation spirit holds the potential for emancipation and cultural re-invigoration, Chi Ming approaches it with a mixture of fascination and caution.

In the works of J S Tan, the exploration of a culturally or primordially more authentic time and space plays out with equally haunting power. In his first solo exhibition "Culture of Entitlement", Tan forced us to confront our modern institutions like a Dorian Gray before his portrait. For all of modernity's achievements, it created an iron-cage of bureaucracy that entitled sanctimonious but disempowering institutions such as religious orders, monarchical powers and gender-based systems, to oppress or leave behind those who did not conform. Tan in such works as *Girl Falling*, *Glutton* and *Girl Screaming* (illustrated pages 10 - 11) unmasked the bitter illusions left over from the Enlightenment which had failed to deliver the promise of human order and liberation based on human praxis.

A year later, Tan has surprised his observers with a major conceptual shift. His figurative paintings have given way to a series of enigmatic charcoal drawings and inks. Human agents have been plucked out of the picture and in their place, shapes and lines, bricks and wires, and unnamable objects float in space. With the meticulous gradation of a monochromatic palette, Tan begins to liberate from the breakdown of man-made hierarchies into the order and security of unchanging geometrical laws.

*Study of Space 1* (title page) could be a metaphor for such a transitional moment. Like some Weberian iron-cage of a technically ordered, regimented, dehumanized society, it taunts with a passage to freedom but finally clamps down with an impenetrable top. And although ordered, Tan's hypnotic compositions such as *Study of Space 2* and *Study of Space 3* (pages 20 and 21) form a visual entrapment that arrests the viewer in contradictory states of inevitable escape and inevitable imprisonment. The paradox sustained in these works is a little like Schrödinger's cat, the enduring icon of quantum mechanics which presents the scenario of a cat in a black box that is alive and dead based on a quantum truth but alive and dead when we look into the box. We step into the twilight zone again in the works *Study of Chair in Space*, where the world of qualities (the chair) eats into the dimension of abstract space as if the former belonged to a mightier, immutable substratum. But the illusion of security does not hold. Isolated and austere, the chair sits reminiscent of Andy Warhol's 1964 *Electric Chair*, suspended in a wash of still mist with its arms pinned down by two dark ominous bars.

We are left wondering, with a mixture of attraction and fear that borders on the sublime, whether an alternative order is really being presented here.

Certainly the tumultuous decades of modernity, from its global wars and totalitarian regimes to systemic financial meltdowns, have proven society's ability to forge new myths out of moments of despair. And so what began as an urge to escape has the power to transcend into a revitalization movement, not least of which is China's opening-and-reform in the 1970s. Chinese artists likewise burst through the socialist representational tradition and its remarkably constrained but fertile environment to give birth to some of the most significant Chinese contemporary art movements such as Cynical Realism in the 1990s. Today, Tan's work represents not only that of a generation standing at the tail end of disenchantment but at the intersection between art and mankind's greatest creative power yet: technology.

The Hong Kong-born, Beijing-raised Tan these days straddles computer science, design and art theory as both a student and a practitioner in Rhode Island, U.S. And with digital design guru John Maeda as a major influence, Tan has embraced a new world of "magic", programming vast, sprawling digital universes. The fascination and creative play revived by technology represents a crucial counter tendency in modern culture that has emerged to fill the void of departed beliefs. The longing for other worlds, once satisfied by religion and visions of heaven, is now being answered by virtual universes with new social architecture and identities, and their own rules of life and death.

As the modernist project delegitimizes, another response that has emerged is a re-enchantment with the spiritual or primordial. Indeed, recent years have seen the spiritualities and philosophies of the East migrate into the West, sometimes arriving whole, but more often cut up and customised. In Tan's large-scale work *Menhirs* (pages 32 - 33), towering blocks rise like caged ominous symbols, silent but expectant and guarding a light whose origin is obscure. By drawing on the image of Menhirs, ancient stones thought to have been used by druids for human sacrifice or remnants of a complex ideological system, Tan no longer portrays an individual or collective body struggling against a system, but a more mysterious primitive force awaiting liberation. In his ink works on rice paper, the impression of captive fences (*Study of Lines 6 and 7*, page 16) are challenged by a more playful rediscovery of lines and looser, calligraphic brushwork that call up a traditional Chinese artistic sensibility more intimate with the spirit of things than rigid outward form or realistic reenactment (*Study of Lines 1 and 2*, page 4).

As Chinese philosopher and writer Lin Yutang (1895 - 1976) remarked in *Art of Living*, "man is, as it were, sandwiched between heaven and earth, between idealism and realism, between lofty thoughts and the baser passions," which could account for the inescapable fate of all man-made institutions to eventually cave-in because of the flaws inherited by its imperfect creator. Like the magical monkey we had enough power to knock on the gates of heaven but were not good enough, at least not on our own, to remain in the company of the immortals. Indeed none of the counter values, counter utopias or systems - not technology, not the new spiritualities - that man has come up with in the last few decades have proven worthy to uphold a new world order. The works of J S Tan and Chi Ming, in radically different ways, harbour the stirrings of a complex adaptive reaction to the decentering of our modern institutions. The honesty of their felt experience and their ability to explore dialectics in their art are a testimony of their talent as artists and as bold forerunners of a generation in transition.





Chi Ming 迟明  
*Rest*  
小憩  
Acrylic on Paper  
纸上丙烯  
2012  
35 x 51 cm

# CHI MING 迟明



Born 1984, Yantai, Shandong Province, China

Graduated from The Central Academy of Fine Art in 2008, B.F.A. Degree

Graduated from The Oil Painting Department of The Central Academy of Fine Art in 2011,  
M.F.A. Degree

Living and Working in Beijing

## EXHIBITIONS

2012

*Cafam Future*, Report of Young Chinese Artists, Central Academy of Fine Art Museum, Beijing

*Face*, Portraiture Group Exhibition, Minsheng Bank Art Museum, Shanghai

2011

*The Start of a Long Journey*, Graduation Show of Works of Excellence, Central Academy of Fine Art, Beijing

*Affordable Art Fair*, 798 District, Beijing

2007

*Strength of the School*, A Selection of Fourteen Students, Group Exhibition, Central Academy of Fine Art Museum, Beijing

## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

*Liu Xiaodong Collection*, Beijing

*Minsheng Bank Collection*, China

*Central Academy of Fine Art Museum Collection*, Beijing

1984 年 生于山东，烟台

2008 年毕业于中央美术学院油画系，美术学士学位

2011 年毕业于中央美术学院油画系，文学硕士学位

在北京生活和工作

## 展览

2012 年 “CAFAM 未来展，中国青年艺术生态报告”，中央美术学院美术馆，北京

2012 年 “开放的肖像”，肖像画群展，民生现代美术馆，上海

2011 年 “千里之行”中央美术学院二零一一届毕业生优秀作品展，北京

2011 年 798 “买得起艺术节”，北京

2007 年 学院实力派画家 14 人作品展，北京

## 公共收藏

刘小东教授收藏，北京

民生银行公司收藏，中国

中央美院美术馆，北京，中国

# J S TAN 陈建升



Born in Hong Kong

Currently undertaking his Bachelor of Arts Degree at Brown University  
and Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree at the Rhode Island School of Design, USA  
Living and Working Rhode Island, United States of America

## EXHIBITIONS

2011 - 2012

*A Culture of Entitlement*, J S Tan Solo Exhibition, Atkins & Ai Gallery, Beijing

2010

Western Academy Beijing, China

## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

*Chevron Corporate Collection, Beijing and Nanjing, China*

*Standard Chartered Bank Corporate Collection, New York, USA*

*Western Academy of Beijing, China*

生于香港

目前在布朗大学进修艺术学士学位, 在美国罗德岛设计学院进修美术学士学位  
在美国罗德岛生活和工作

展览

2011 年 " 权利的文化 ", 艾特艾画廊北京

2010 年 中国北京京西学校

公共收藏

雪佛龙公司收藏, 北京, 南京, 中国  
渣打银行公司收藏, 纽约, 美国  
中国北京京西学校, 中国



Chi Ming 迟明  
*Past Lovers*  
 往日情侣  
 Oil on Wooden Panel  
 木板油画  
 2011  
 20 x 20 cm

*Collected through The Minsheng Bank Art Museum, Exhibited & Published Minsheng Bank Art Museum, Shanghai: 'Face' A Survey of Chinese Portraiture, 2012, pp. 258 - 259*  
 《民生现代美术馆策展人画册》，民生现代美术馆展览和出版，上海：《开放的肖像 - 中国肖像画调查》，2012 年，第 258 页 - 第 259 页

Chi Ming 迟明  
*Intimacy IV*  
 私密之四  
 Oil on Wooden Panel  
 木板油画  
 2011  
 50 x 50 cm

*Central Academy of Fine Art Museum Collection, Beijing*  
 中央美术学院美术馆画册，北京



Chi Ming 迟明  
*Intimacy VII*  
 私密之七  
 Oil on Wooden Panel  
 木板油画  
 2011  
 50 x 50 cm

*Collection of Professor Liu Xiaodong, Beijing*  
 刘小东教授收藏，北京





# C COLLECTIONS



J S Tan 陈建升

*The Janitor*

看门人

Oil on Canvas

涂底帆布油画

2009

180 x 100 cm

*Standard Chartered Bank Corporate Collection,*

*New York, USA*

渣打银行公司收藏, 纽约, 美国



J S Tan 陈建升

*Study of Lines 1*

线条习作 1

Ink on Chinese Rice Paper

Mounted on Wooden Panel

中国水墨宣纸木板

60 x 81 cm

2011

*Chevron China,*

*President, Mr Steve Wilson's Office Collection*

雪佛龙公司收藏, 中国

您曾提到很喜欢汤姆·萨克斯的火星任务计划。

我曾对资本主义对当今艺术创作模式的影响展开思考。火星任务计划，让我想到与艺术主体相关的所有角色（演员、助理、体制、公众与评论家）的集体活动，是如何转变了它的意义。

数字时代儿童体验世界以及与世界互动的方式冲击现有体制有如当头棒喝。您认为什么才是适合数字艺术的“展出空间”？

互联网。

从许多方面来看，目前部份艺术家的作品使用了数字时代的表达语言，代表后 Photoshop 世界。但重要的传统都来自过去时代，例如在帆布上绘画、为画廊创作作品、能视为物品的作品、最适合不可重复体验的作品、比较适合亲身观看而非在屏幕上浏览的作品。作品的消费方式与视觉语言的使用方式之间，似乎有些落差。

同时跨足美术与科技领域，是否让你深刻意识到身为千禧时代艺术家的角色？

问题是，艺术家的角色已随着时间的推移发生重大变化。特别是现代主义时期，每一代的艺术家都试图重新定义艺术家角色。然而后现代艺术界普遍认为，所有的现代思想家都没错。这意味着所有现代艺术家自我定义的方式实际上都是无可厚非的。

艺术毕竟是一个用来形容特定作品类型倾向的字眼。有谁会比业界本身更适合定义这些倾向呢？另一方面，后现代又在另一个层面加深了问题复杂性。它的多样性，确实让这些“倾向”更难以辨识。

我觉得它是那种知道越多就越不了解的事物之一。但我相信艺术家是一种社会存在，不但与社会相关联、为社会而生，且其作品具有与生俱来的社会批判性。

如果将您比作一件艺术作品，那会是什么？

米开朗基罗的大卫像，或者是吉尔伯特·斯图尔特的“华盛顿肖像”——因为将来会出现哪些艺术作品尚且不得而知。

## 陈建升和何晓霖的访谈

您过去的具象作品被诠释为您用来控制教条及压迫式权力结构的方法。显然几何图形中是没有人的！这个新阶段是不是一种使包括您在内的每个人走出画面的方法，同时也是一种创意过程？

作品主体将我引领到一种截然不同的研究之中。我想以一种正式、甚至是科学的方法来探索空间。但部分的我也渗透且反映在作品中，比如笼状结构、领结的幽默感、纸张的表面处理等。但很大程度上，这些仅仅是按照本人掌握的创作手法并且按照本人创作方式所产生的作品。我猜在先前的具象作品中，我主要是受到信仰所累。

你的工作模式为何？

我在这里以一种几近科学的方式工作——画下线条、记号，再往后退看看效果好不好，然后重复直到完成。

我并不认为艺术是一种过程。对我来说那听起来更像工艺。艺术也不是很多艺术家所希望美化的某种生活方式。相反的，艺术是一种知性的努力，是观念的争论，也是一种审美哲学。它不是一种生活方式，而是一种思考方式。对我来说艺术更象是一种回应。

所以发射进入“太空”，对您来说就像扮演上帝的角色，并让您从对上帝的质疑中解放出来？

我想你可以这样说。

有时候，只因为你希望相信某种事物，并不表示你能够相信。我同时也对完全依赖选择的这种幻觉存有疑问。就像身为一个艺术家，我并非真的选择当艺术家，但基于基因组成、教养以及一些外部事件的特定组成，我便无可避免地成为艺术家。这可能是化学染色体组合所致，而不是由人来选择决定结果。

艺术家的商品化及多样化，也就是艺术家即创业家、艺术家即品牌的现象，有些艺术家比其他同侪更易于接受。这对您有何影响？

我涉足的业务很多，其中很多并不会被人们归类于“艺术”。然而，所有努力背后的基本动机都是艺术的理念，以及它在二十一世纪的社会功能。举例来说，正因为艺术我才决定取得计算机学位。正因为艺术（美术）我才进入设计与工艺领域。也正因为艺术才开始创作电玩游戏。我思考艺术、它的社会功能、现代主义如何改变艺术，以及在二十一世纪创作艺术有何意义。对我来说，这些问题带领我进入许多不同领域，包括制作家具！

我想一般而言“艺术家”之间是有所分别的。有些人在现有的艺术定义下创作（以明示的方式运用艺术），有些（偏非主流）则挑战既有的艺术典范（以暗示的方式运用艺术）。一般而言，我只做我必须做的而已。

您挑战的典范有哪些？

举例来说，当我到新美术馆观看卡斯特·奥莱展出，我认为展场空间的转变极具创意，让人重新思考展场空间功能的手法也相当聪明（虽然我并不是太喜欢展出内容的深度）。针对这场展出，我和一位朋友创作了一组装置艺术，将展场空间转化为游乐场。我们制作了一个滑梯和一组秋千。卡斯特·奥莱在新当代艺术博物馆展出的滑梯真的可以滑，而且贯穿展场三个楼层，然而我们的滑梯和秋千虽相互作用但不具功能性（滑梯因为角度太低而无法滑动，秋千也紧贴墙壁）。这使它们停留在“画廊展品”／“请勿触摸”的范畴里。我的意图是让这些装置艺术物品（秋千与滑梯）达到一种互动平衡（就像游乐场设施），并将之保存在艺廊静态的知性环境下。这提供了一种假性功能——由物体本身对自己提出质疑。

您认为这种疏离的倾向就象是一种修正机制吗？

人类欲望是没有尽头的。让你不至于吃到撑死的，是你的身体，也就是动物性。猫就绝对不会有这种倾向。它知道什么时候自己已经吃饱。上帝是公平的。人类因为太过聪明而可能带有危险性，但他在我们身上安排了一种机制，也就是对安逸、奢华与暴食贪得无厌、甚至带有自我毁灭意味的欲望。这一点从我们物质主义的文化便可窥见。

绘画是您牵制这种动物本性的一种方法吗？

我从绘画中找到平静。如果很久没画，会觉得五脏六腑都纠结在一起。

毛泽东、孔子和市场三者对您的行为以及行为理由带来了哪些影响？

我的儿时记忆除了听话就是用功。放学后我会直接去找父亲做功课或学画。我记得孩童时期很少跟其他孩子们玩耍。我的生活围绕着几个大人打转。现在想起来，会奇怪自己怎么没得抑郁症或自闭症。我知道我的父母很爱我，但我不明白自己为什么被当作某种私有财产对待。长大成人后，我开始慢慢了解原因。这种观念在中国根深蒂固，数千年来家庭暴力逐渐灌输到儒家传统之中。除此之外，我那生于民国初年的父母也深受当时革命式教育的影响。我父亲极度关心我画些什么。因为童年太过寂寞，我发现绘画的过程就是自我肯定的过程。我画出自己的内心世界，还有心目中的净土，但我也希望摆脱这种噩梦。因此我儿时的画作是种逃避，同时也是一种负担。

不同的文化与权力结构，会产生出不同的方式来为暴力辩护。您目前展出作品中所呈现的暴力，算是对这一观点的某种表现吗？

我想每个人内心都存在着侵略性。只是当今社会较为温和，不再容忍暴力，所以我们只能求同存异或学习利用操弄等其他手段。但它永远都会存在。有时我会怀疑，自己这样恪守社会规范是否违反自然。我甚至发现自己停在交通信号灯前，争辩是否应该像其他北京司机一样闯红灯，还是只是为了守法而守法。

您的作品中经常结合暴力与性。

性与人体是奇妙而神秘的。总是遮遮掩掩。我怀疑在我们的性冲动背后，暴力和创造力是同样强大但看不见的生命力。我听说科学家曾进行实验，主张大脑中某个部份与侵略性相关。他们想予以摧毁，但后来发现这会终结人类创造功能的运作。

您接下来有什么打算？

画画。我想要画画。我们终究还是会做自己最想做的事。



## 迟明和何晓蓀的访谈

您对艺术世家的传承始于毛泽东时代，当时艺术背后的动力与当今已大不相同。您如何对自己进行定位呢？

早年我的祖父是某家美术学会的会长，相当于现在的广告公司。后来他成为一位“公众艺术家”，在文革期间负责绘制工厂与家庭所张贴的毛泽东肖像。当时的艺术对于艺术家的真实生活来说并不真实，因为它未能反映出我们的生活状况与内在生命。但它对我们的信仰来说是真实的。我们真诚地信奉一种意识形态与一位救世主。这种由政治定义生活与艺术的方式，只有当今朝鲜的艺术可堪比拟。我父亲赶上了“信仰时代”的尾巴，当时毛泽东就是神。在70年代，他开始绘制电影海报。我从小在放映老片的电影院长大，后来进入中央美术学院就读。那段时间艺术已自成一种信仰，每位艺术家都是自己的太阳。

但我们都知道，太靠近太阳飞行是很危险的。在现今这个后世俗时代，您认为艺术家重获自主权后表现如何？

古代的艺术可能很独特，但具有高度功能性。例如古希腊与埃及艺术、文艺复兴艺术及佛教壁画。作品体现强烈的集体精神与主体，每位艺术家各自负担也比较轻。神话与宗教定义了那个时代的艺术，但更重要的是它代表了人文发展的幼年时期。当时的艺术生机勃勃、新鲜而丰富。我认为每种艺术风格都是“正确的”，诞生均有其道理。是对其所处时代的正确表达。因此对一个高度发展的资本主义世界来说，抽象与概念艺术便发展为适时的表达风格。我们虽然可以从西洋艺术史中学到很多，但它并不是我们的风格。即使是如今艺术家所运用的风格，我仍感觉与现今中国社会现实有些距离。在功能方面，某种程度来说所有艺术基本上都是表达自我。而就艺术自身而言，自我表达若不能影响社会则不具建设性。而这一点只有时间能证明。

时间似乎已经证明，受约束的环境与自由一样都能为艺术提供养分。或者说现代中国的“自由”结合了两者？

这一代的中国人不只受政治也受金钱所控制。我们只剩下安逸的生活了。每个人都纠结于自己微不足道的挣扎之中。在这个国家和时代中的现实是片段的，毫无秩序又极其残酷。我们这一代人生活在和平时期，耗尽自然资源来丰富自己的物质生活。我们虽然不如上几代人吃苦耐劳，但绝对胜于后代。我们比上几代人更能接受新事物，但可能不如后代。我们眼下的现实是枯燥无味的。我们已经距离理想很远。但对于理想、甚至是美好事物，人心深处总留有些许空间。

这就是您尝试捕获的概念吗？

我试着找回一种真实的感觉。我捕捉时间中那些平淡的片断与记忆，并通过画布固定下来。让你“感觉”真实的，并不一定就是事情原貌，而我也不断在现实的内心与表象之间切换。为群众准确而生动地表达真实的一刻，是一种空前的创举。这是一种突破性的体验。我试着找寻生活琐碎细节所表达出的真实时刻，并画出其中诉说的故事。

您认为疏离感是您这一代人的病态。这看起来是一种长期现象。艺术家有能力改变它吗？

我甚至会对艺术家的身份产生怀疑。如果太过投入，它会吞噬你，最后甚至会隔绝你。我们创造的所有事物终究都会隔绝我们。举例来说，汽车、手机、以及我们的所有法律与道德体制，人们的创造初衷是为了促进生活，但这种创造却反而将最终使我们彼此隔绝。孔子只根据人性提出了人类相处之“道”。人们恪守并限制了自身本性，来追求更为“和谐”的存在，有些人则刻意培养以求得公职。不过后来出现了儿子割下自己的肉给饥饿老父吃的故事。这时孝道已变得过于极端了。同样地，艺术理论与艺术体制终究会隔绝艺术。重要的是保护体制与我们的动物天性。

从世界大战和极权主义政治，到系统化的金融垮台，热闹而骚乱的摩登时代证实了社会可以从绝望的时刻中创造新的神话。因此，逃离的愿望也同样有潜力超越，成为复兴的时刻，正如 1970 年代中国的改革开放。相同的，中国艺术家在这种极度受限、又同时资源丰富的环境下，从社会主义写实传统中爆发出来，创造出像二十世纪 90 年代的讽刺性写实主义那样中国当代艺术史上举足轻重的运动。现今，陈建升的作品不仅代表了那个梦想幻灭时代的尾声，更指向一个岔路口，即艺术，和人类迄今为止最强大的创造力量：科技。

出生于香港、成长在北京的陈建升目前就学和从业于美国罗德岛，横跨计算机科学、设计和艺术理论三个领域。在数字设计大师 John Maeda 的影响下，陈建升沉浸在一个新的“魔术”世界里，用计算机程序编排出无垠的、无限延展的宇宙。由科技而生的迷恋和创造力量代表了摩登文化中一个重要的相对趋势，这个趋势的诞生填补了人们逐渐丢失的信仰。曾经为宗教和天国印象所满足的、对另一个世界的渴望，现今在虚拟世界中找到了答案，这个世界有其新的社会秩序和身份，以及其特有的生死规则。

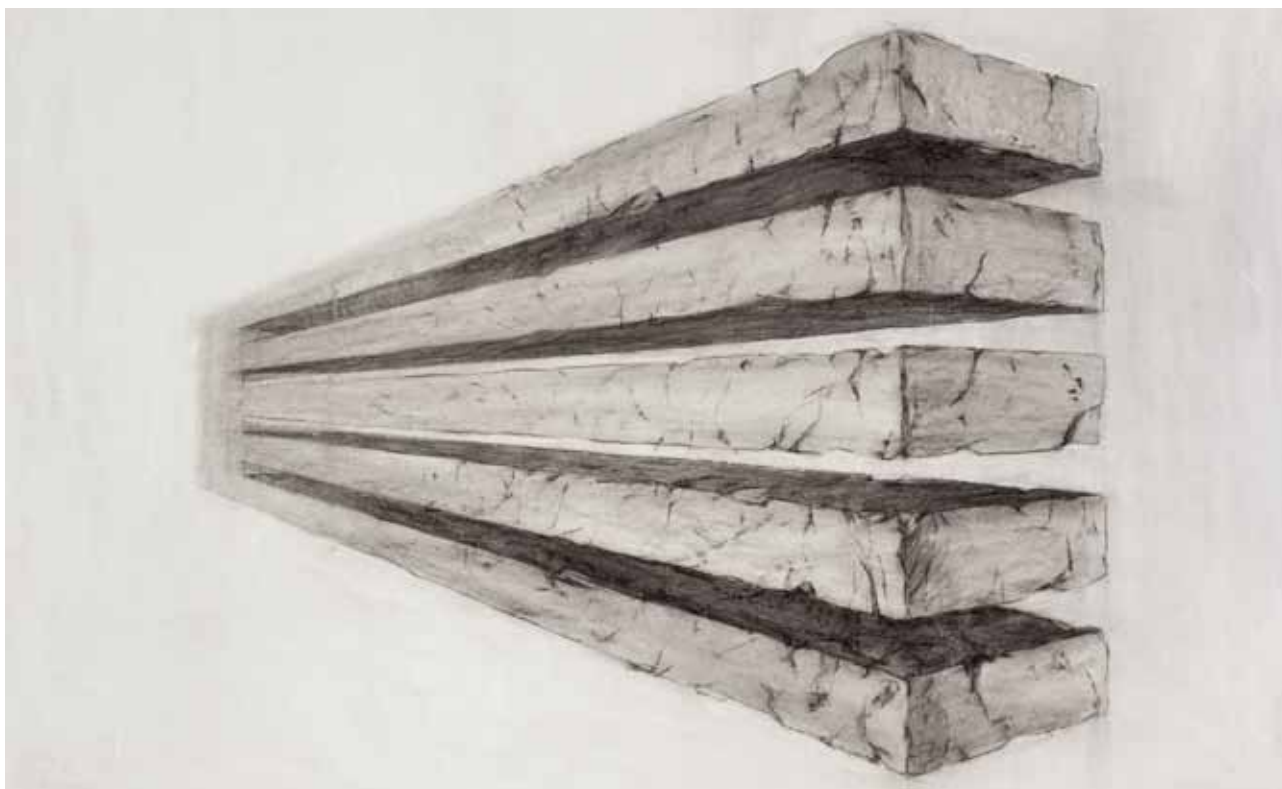
当摩登建树逐渐失去其理，另一种对原始精神世界的迷恋重又产生。的确，近年来，东方世界的精神性和哲学思想流传到了西方，有时其原本内容被完整的保留，但大多都被裁剪或改制。陈建升的大型作品“石柱”中，高耸的石块仿佛被囚禁的不详符号，静默却充满期待，守卫着来源不明的光线。作品借用督伊德教中人体献祭的石柱之标识以及此种远古时期的理想主义，其目的已经不在于塑造个人或集体在系统中的挣扎，而是指向某种等待解放的神秘远古力量。他的宣纸笔墨作品中，被监禁的栏杆（线条习作 6 和 7，第 16 页）为游戏式的线条和松弛的书法笔法所挑战，这种笔法唤醒了传统的中国艺术灵性，它强调事物的精神性，而非试图模仿外在的物质现实（线条习作 1 和 2，第 4 页）。

如中国哲学家和作家林语堂（1895 — 1976）在《生活的艺术》中所说“好像人类是介乎天地之间，介乎理想主义和现实主义之间，介乎崇高的思想和卑鄙的情欲之间。这样的介乎中间，便是人”，这同时说明由于继承了其创造者的不完美本性，一切人为因素都终将塌陷。正如有足够魔力敲打天门的猴子，却不足以与神仙同等并列，无论是人们在过去几十年里衍发出的反价值、反乌托邦或任何系统——科技的、新精神性的——都不足以支撑一种新的世界秩序。陈建升和迟明的作品以截然不同的方式，表述了对摩登制度不断离心这一现象的复杂反响。他们对于自身经历持有诚恳的态度，在自身艺术创作中不断探索辩证法，这些充分声明了他们作为艺术家的创作才能，和他们在转换过渡的一代人中，大胆领跑者的身份。

陈建升 J S Tan  
空间中的砖块习作 4（对面）  
*Study of Bricks in Space 4 (opposite)*  
木炭画在木板上  
Charcoal on Paper  
2011  
76 x 106 cm

陈建升的作品以及其对于一个文化性的、原始时空的探索同样震撼人心。他的首次个展“权利的文化”迫使观众大胆面对自身的摩登制度，恰似他自画像前的多利安灰色。现代性的全部成就，即是制造了一个官僚主义的铁笼，将权利赋予一些表面上假装圣洁、实质上剥夺权力的制度，例如宗教规则、帝王政权和以性别为划分基础的系统，从而压制或抛弃那些不遵从如此制度的人。陈建升“坠落的女孩”、“格鲁顿一家”和“吼叫的女孩”（第 10—11 页）揭露出启蒙运动残留的苦澀幻影——它并未在实践的基础上给人类带来秩序和自由。

一年以后，陈建升给观众带来了一次彻头彻尾的创作理念的转变。他的写实画作转变为一系列神秘莫测的炭笔和墨水图绘。人形因素从画面中被摘除，取而代之的是形状和线条、砖块和金属丝，还有空间中漂浮的匿名物体。通过单色系范围内的精细渐变，陈建升开始打破人为等级制度，从中解放出来，转而在几何定律的永恒中找到安全感。



“空间习作 1”（扉页）可以看作是这一过渡时刻的比喻。仿佛某种韦伯模式的铁笼——一个以纯技术编排、管制、非人性化的社会——它半嘲笑的提供一条自由的出路，却最终以不可穿透的、实心的顶层结构将这条出路紧紧夹住。陈建升的这一系列尽管充满秩序，其作品例如“空间习作 2”和“空间习作 3”（第 20—21 页）却旨在建立某种视觉陷阱，观众被拘留在不可避免的逃离和不可避免的监禁二者所形成的矛盾之中。如此的自相矛盾正如薛定谔之猫的理想实验，它是量子力学永恒的标识。实验中，一只猫被放置在一个不透明的盒子里，它的生死状态完全取决于在我们窥视盒子的状况之时，其中的量子是否衰变。“空间中的椅子习作”系列带领我们又一次步入介于两者之间的边缘地带，作品中，物质世界（椅子）侵蚀进入抽象空间，仿佛前者属于某个更伟大且永恒的深度层面。但是如此安全感的幻想却转瞬即逝。孤立而冷漠，它让我们联想到安迪沃荷尔 1964 年的作品“电椅”——滞留在一层静止的薄雾之中，其扶手被两根不详的栏杆钉住。吸引力和恐惧混杂在一起，游走于升华的边缘，我们由此产生疑惑，这是否为我们展现了某种可以用来取而代之的另类秩序。

迟明在一间不算昂贵的画室里工作，楼道里晾满邻居的衣服，野猫在周围四处游荡。迟明带着表现主义式的细节勾勒和对色彩范围的高度敏感创造出一个自传体的、充满力量的写实世界。他把创作对象表现成被剪掉的人形、被擦掉的脸庞和看起来未完成的空间，以此暗示某种另类空间和足以逃脱我们掌控的生机勃勃之力。在“往日情侣”中，这个另类空间代表着往日的纯净，其他作品却也同时表明这种生机勃勃之力最终可能是毁灭性的、不受控制的，例如：“盛夏”（扉页）中性施虐狂的主题，“汉书”（第5页）和“花季不在”（第56页）中的名利和腐化，以及“芭蕾舞之一”（第37页）和“燥热的空气”（第49页）中相互侵蚀的多重视角。实际上，在与迟明的对话中，他表示那隐藏在男人背后的英雄主义、他的创造才能和暴力实际上很可能是同一体的。

这种“生机勃勃之力”的确曾经出现过。在西方，它曾被命名为“爱神厄洛斯”、“死神塔纳托斯”以及“酒神巴克斯”。它的每一次出现都是对生之再确认的引诱，却最终踉跄地绕进了混乱之中。在东方，正如迟明所影射，日本武士的武士道法典提供了一种方式，能以意义明确的行为和智慧条理去驯服人们最狂热的精神。与此相似的孔夫子之道或许在千年来加固了中华文明，却逐渐被用以佐证私密空间暴力的合理性。“放学后”（第8页）中迟明面露惧色，他周围的布景迷人、好看且很有感知触觉，恰似桌上大堆的纸张，年轻的孩子在父亲的严厉家教下忠恳的练他的书法。如论是否由于迟明对体罚有亲身经历，无论所描绘的场景多么生活化和平凡，他经常在其中刻画出某种阴森逼近的毁灭所带来的视觉和感官体验。如果与文明之前的人类心灵重建密切联系，能带来被解放和被赋予生命力的可能性，迟明对其的态度则既迷恋又谨慎。

展览：2012 年  
"CAFAM 未来展，中国青年艺术生态报告"，  
中央美术学院美术馆，北京  
*All Works Exhibited: CafaM Future,  
Report of Young Chinese Artists,  
Central Academy of Fine Art Museum, Beijing, 2012*



迟明 Chi Ming  
汉书  
*A Chinese Book*  
木板油画，中国水墨宣纸，胶带  
Oil on Wooden Panel,  
Ink on Rice Paper, Tape  
2012  
40 x 40 cm



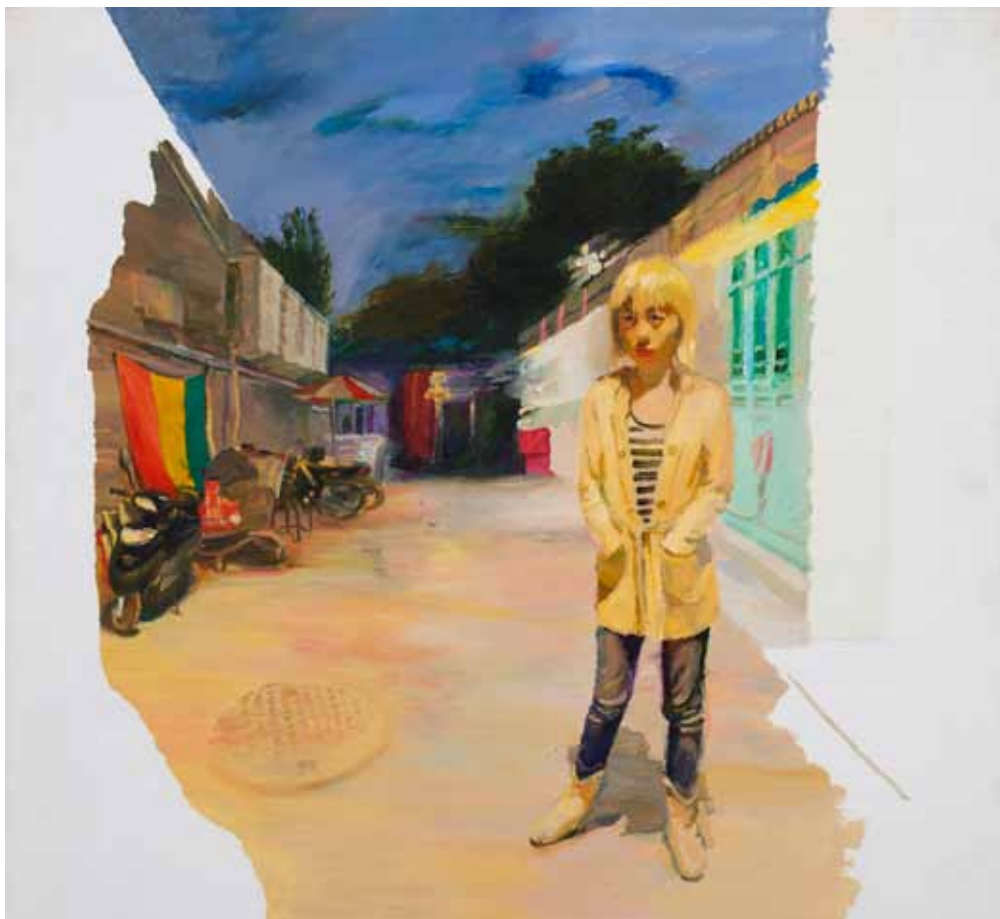
迟明的作品中对渴望自由的表达，体现在其对社会准则的反抗、对认识的扭曲和对现实的升华，在现实主义、超现实主义和浪漫主义之间舞蹈。后者强烈的体现于作品“芭蕾梦之二”（第44页），其中，迟明的女神、也是他的女朋友被描绘成一个板着脸的、狄加斯式的芭蕾舞者；这幅画作在“乌云满天”（第四页）和“KTV”（封面插图）中被逆转，在这两件作品里，他的女朋友带着金色假发，由此，迟明在这种短暂的释放间，得以颠覆他的创作对象。他在找寻生活中的超现实元素（“冬天里的一把火”，第25页）和对其的塑造（“去向何方”，



第29页）之中捕捉对叙事之弧线的渴望。他也在不断找寻中国八零后一代的理想主义，这是一种为政治和钱财所制、为其本身肤浅的自由所囚禁的理想主义。比如，在“往日情侣”（第38页）中，缺席的人形建造了一个在现实之中，将腐化和幻灭隔离开来的神圣地带。另外，迟明画笔下强烈而令人陶醉的室内空间——以他的芭蕾舞者系列为例——仿佛被照亮的舞台，静候即将登台的演员们。驰名作品中现实与戏剧性的并存，揭示了他渴望像导演和演员以神圣的敬意对待舞台那样去对待生活。

迟明 Chi Ming  
红手印  
*Red Handprint*  
布面油画  
Oil on Canvas  
2011  
50 x 50 cm

出生于山东省的艺术家迟明以一种复杂的态度对待与他同辈的一代人。透过圆形的、布依族式的眼镜，他观察到一个半神话、半冷漠的现实世界。今系一座重要工业城市的烟台是他的出生地，秦始皇曾经在这里寻找长生不老药。迟明的父亲是一位生活和工作在毛泽东光环之下的画家，他绘制电影式的海报，用以宣传毛主席的信息。2001年，迟明移居北京，就读于中央美术学院。彼时，多产的画家和绘画教授刘晓冬以他流畅的现实主义叙事风格同政治波普和批判式现实主义抗衡。刘晓冬的艺术风格主导了迟明在中央美术学院的创作环境。其后，迟明发展和缔造了他自己特有的现实主义——不为创新而创新，而是追求情感的真诚，以及将人类看作质朴“尘世生灵”的哲学。



祖父在文革期间绘制毛泽东的肖像，父亲生长在毛式宗教时代末期，现今的迟明拷问与自己同辈的一代人以自身为宗教的效果和印象。毛泽东统治的尾声标志着一个英雄主义时代的结束，一个因志同道合的男人们密切结盟所产生的自尊的结束（第9页的“友谊之一”与第40页的“友谊之二”之间有着彻底的反差）。对迟明而言，中国经济发展最为迅速的时期带来了某种自由，同时又在实利主义和文化衰竭之下导致了一种新的监禁。中国年轻的一代出生在缺乏英雄和理想主义的二十年间，他们的姿态似乎是在腻烦中接受破碎的物质现实。“城门开”（第45页）巧妙的捕捉了这种社会状况，作品描绘一间卧室，不可触及的窗户和空床上亮着的灯，其标题却讽刺性的宏大。

迟明 Chi Ming  
乌云满天  
Black Skies  
Oil on Canvas  
布面油画  
2011  
60 x 60 cm

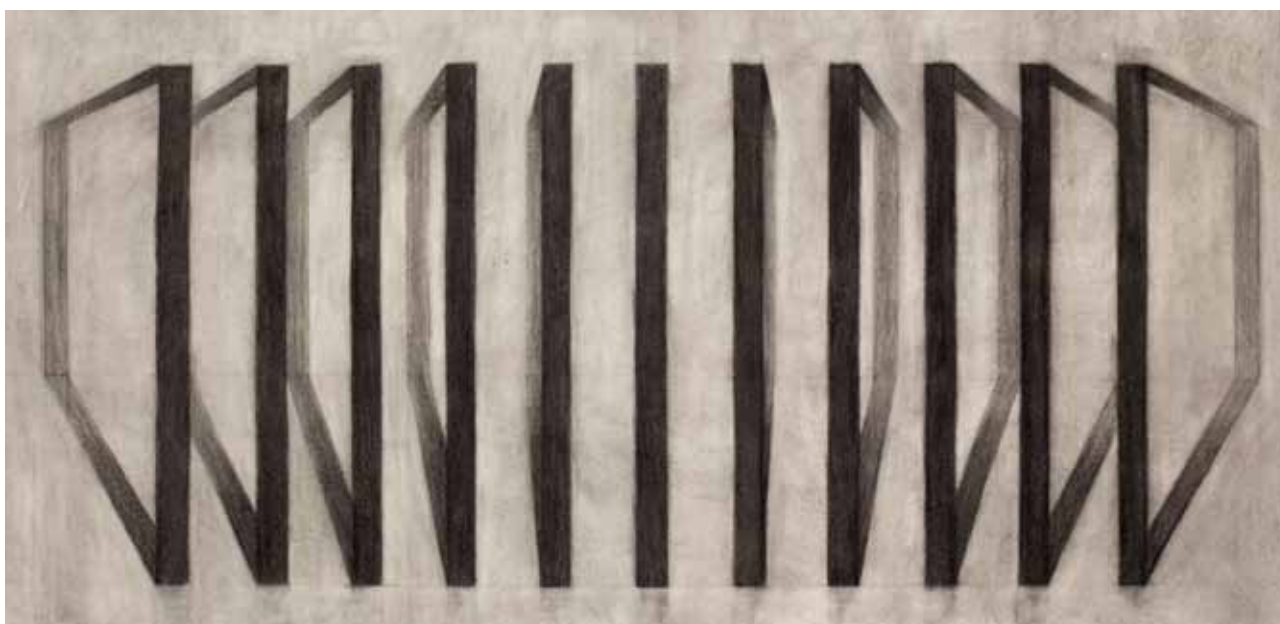
## 《测试自由的温度》

何晓霖 (Michelle Ho)

批评文章翻译：王艺潼

“人类的技巧增高时，破坏力也同时加高，因为我们现在都像那只有法术的猴子一样，能腾云驾雾，在空中大翻筋斗（即飞机在空中倒飞侧飞），由我们的猴腿上拔下毫毛，使它们变成小猴，去攻击我们的敌人，敲打天门，粗鲁无礼的把看门人推开，要求和天神同等并列。”

——《生活的艺术》，林语堂



不久前，卡尔荣格声明：“我们可畏的神明们已经变更了其姓名——它们现在以‘主义’为韵。”就像《西游记》中有魔力的猴子，人类将一切神圣的权威扫地出门，建立我们自己伟大的民主制度、资本主义以及科学——其神圣的东道主：愤世嫉俗、世俗化、幻想破灭和怀疑态度很快就竞相问世。但我们的世界近来似乎开始厌倦这些“主义”。西方世界常把中国比作某种非理性且不受控制的力量，它有千年唯实论之传承，其哲学思想并不追求使宇宙非神秘化，而是对宇宙不胜惊美、大为赞叹。中国在此时崛起确是处于一个奇妙的时机，因为，在理性化革命仍激烈进行之时，一种新的对科技的神秘化和原始精神状态正在崭露头角。年轻有才的艺术家迟明和陈建升的作品，是处在幻想破灭和反文化式的幻想构建之间的、预示性的酝酿和萌生。

陈建升 JS Tan

空间习作 4

*Study of Space 4*

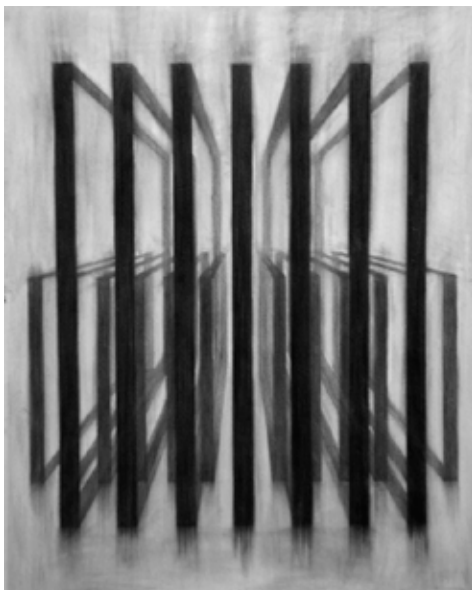
木炭画在木板上

Charcoal on Paper Mounted on Wooden Panel

2011

95 x 160 cm

通过高度表现主义的油画作品呈现出不羁天性的存在，迟明藉此找到了释放，反之陈建升则在稳定、合乎逻辑的形式中筛选出混乱，透过它们固有的稳定性找到释放。迟明的世界是情色、窥探且极度肉体的，通过数不清的微小切向笔触，结合各种浓重色彩，呈现出强烈的情绪性效果。很明显地，他乐于凭借自己的绘画技巧探索肌理，特别是对女性形体的探索，也喜欢用他精致的调色品味，以浪漫手法呈现内部、私有空间、自我的探索以及性幻想。迟明也通过暧昧的指代来品味各种隐藏的开放性问题，例如《仲夏》里那把刀，是爱人手中威胁与攻击的工具，或是《小大人》里扮作成年女性的小侄女，还是主题相反的《渴望童年》，画中他的缪思女神变得幼化且怀抱着一只玩具熊。在《锁链》中他探索了SM的神秘世界，描绘着没有头部或仅呈现部份的躯体，有时则在其作品中人物头部画布上留下些许胶带，例如《中国书》、《木地板之外》和《爱人》等作品。对迟明来说，这就好比对绝对自由的拥抱，虽带有无政府色彩，都是面对琐碎、乏善可陈现代生活的解药——此外更是生命的肯定。此时，陈建升则采用了完全相反的手法，通过他的水墨与炭笔作品，将权力释放为



合乎逻辑且预设的指令。以一种临摹生命的艺术手法，（陈建升曾表示并非自愿选择成为艺术家）他信奉自订的法则以及无可辩驳的形式。与迟明形成对比，陈建升揭露了秩序中的美，并通过秩序的过程揭露其中之美。虽然 Michelle Ho 曾表示陈建升早期所画人物“对观者施加了心理与情绪的控制”，他最近的炭笔与水墨作品却相反地“解放为纯粹的形状与线条，几何不变定律的秩序与安全性”。陈建升还说道“空间吃掉了空间……带来了自主”。陈建升以高度纪律，通过单一色调创造出极为敏感的光影层次，展现的不只是技巧还有决心。这并不是说陈建升创作这些作品时毫无乐趣，描述《在第六空间研究砖块》让他联想到“大领结”。观察迟明与陈建升作品的关连性，可以发现两者均属跨文化手法。正如陈建升通过对其选择物质的技术掌握进入了东方、尤其是孔子修身自律的范畴，坚持人必先自制而后才能治人的信条，而迟明则是有意或无意地颂扬西方、笛卡尔式心灵驾驭物质的个人主义与二元论模式。

艾特艾画廊（Atkins and Ai）荣幸推出“测试自由的温度”联展。感谢尼可拉斯 Nikolaus Ellrodt 为我们引见迟明，也再度感谢伊恩·查尔斯 Ian Charles Stewart 向我们推荐多才多艺的陈建升。我们也有幸邀请到中视远方（北京）文化传媒有限公司艾美奖获奖团队成员 Michelle Ho 小姐，为此次展览撰写评论文章并对艺术家进行采访。策展过程让我们乐在其中，也希望您会喜欢这次展出。

陈建升 JS Tan  
空间习作 6 Study of Space 6  
纸木炭

Charcoal on Paper,  
Mounted on Canvas  
140 x 115 cm

2011

雪佛龙公司收藏，中国

Chevron Corporate Collection, Nanjing



## 序言

裴依珊 (Emily de Wolfe Pettit)

自主，这种选择与自决的权力，是存在于必要与奢侈之间的一种奇特悖论。自主的伙伴自由也是个谜——最大程度的脱离束缚便意味着全权委托——其中暗示的自制亦是如此。有句俗话说：“追求自由反成自身欲望之奴隶，追求纪律反而获得自主”。<sup>1</sup> 迟明与陈建升这两位同样出身全球知名艺术学府并师承本国名师的艺术家，尽管在现实与艺术的世界里南辕北辙，近年来却都从事与律己、深层次主题，透过艺术表现来探索自由与自主的概念。摆脱传承衣钵，不受其所擅长的单一艺术类型或风格的限制，还有就像年轻人追求独特自我一样，最终目的是确保拥有真正参与自决过程的必要自由。或许他们的原因与目标存在着共同性，这些作品的创作过程却从根本上有所不同。一个热情，另一个则说有多冷静就有多冷静；正如何晓蓀 (Michelle Ho) 所观察：“从道家观点来看，他们就好比水与火。” 将这些作品并列比较，有趣的是你可以发现他们如何相互呼应：尤其是陈建升水墨作品中的绘画品质，以及迟明油画中的透视法层次，与对方比较都反而更显突出。透过其作品，可以看出，迟明是他自身欲望的俘虏，还有那永无止境、描写权力与他缪司女神角色扮演之间的暧昧。而陈建升则透过纪律与明确性释放欲望，并寻求自身解脱，甚至玩乐。



身为艺术世家第三代传人的迟明，继承了另一个时代的艺术家衣钵。他的祖父专画毛泽东画像，当时贴满全中国每座工厂每个家庭。迟明父亲从 70 年代开始绘制电影海报，虽具有较高的艺术自主性但仍处于同样的定式低位，而这就是迟明所成长的世界。总体来说那是一个单调的世界，“艺术”的目的就是临摹生活，但生活却与艺术毫无相关。然而这一切即将改变——毛泽东过世，无所不在的资本主义很快就要诞生；像迟明这样的理想主义者，不论精神上或实质上都需要向内探索，寻找美的事物并从外界那接踵而来的混沌与他本人所说的“失序”中解脱。与父亲、祖父不同的是，迟明很幸运能够沉浸于艺术的自由当中，并渴望从周围事物中发现美好或者对其进行美化。另一方面，陈建升的家族中则无艺术家先例。在这种情况下，他选择艺术家做为职业便更显奇特，甚至可能违背了家人的期待，尤其是他个性外向踏实且多才多艺，大可选择更为“主流”的职业。陈建升早期作品便透露出与环境的妥协，其中充斥着外部权力结构邪恶的一面，还有社会阶级所赋予的权利与造成的不平等。矛盾心态，以及对未知领域有意识选择的辛辣品味，对两位做为人与艺术家的身分而言都并不陌生。

<sup>1</sup> Frank Herbert, *Dune*, 1965 年。

迟明 Chi Ming  
无所事事 (上)  
*Idle (above)*  
木板油画  
Oil on Wooden Panel  
2011  
60 x 60 cm

迟明 Chi Ming  
公主日记  
*Princess Diaries (previous, title page)*  
布面油画  
Oil on Canvas  
2012  
60 x 60 cm

展览：2012 年 “CAFAM 未来展，中国青年艺术生态报告”，中央美术学院美术馆，北京  
*Exhibited: Cafam Future, Report of Young Chinese Artists, Central Academy of Fine Art Museum, Beijing, 2012*

艾特艾画廊 • 北京  
ATKINS & AI GALLERY



迟明 - 陈建升 二重展

《测试自由的温度》

批评和访谈

何晓箴 (Michelle Ho)

设计和序言

裴依珊 (Emily de Wolfe Pettit)