



1| Hong Hao, *My Things-Book-Keeping of 06A*, 2007, c-print photograph, 120 x 205 cm, Edition of 12. 2| Hong Hao, *10 Years*, Chinese Contemporary, 2006, c-print photograph, 127 x 226 cm, Edition of 12. Both Hong Hao images are courtesy of the Chinese Contemporary Factory (www.chinesecontemporary.com). 3| Luo Brothers, *Mao*, 2006, oil on canvas, 151 x 151 cm. Courtesy of the Chinese Contemporary Factory (www.chinesecontemporary.com).



LING JIAN

Moving steadily across the diverse mixing palette of modern artists China has to offer, we cannot ignore Berlin-based Ling Jian. _____Ling's thing is beauty; he has established a perfect liaison in the co-mingling of Asian and European facial features that spawns these gorgeous, androgynous canvass-dwelling creatures. His photo-realistic portraits explore the nature of beauty and its relationship to the sublime, in other words he fully intends to get us all going, mouth agape, at his vision of the flawless being. Aside from solid communist-conviction, religion stands prominent in Ling's ideals, the image of Buddha a regular feature of his work. But even Buddha is not safe from improvement; Ling obviously feels that after thousands of years in the limelight, he needs a bit of a face-lift! Skilfully using the brush like a plastic surgeon's scalpel, he applies his own divine adjustments to the iconic image. With Buddha all botoxed and fit for the Oscars, it seems we can all relax in the knowledge that he can continue ruling his wistful realm for eternity. This scientific techno-beauty bubbles just below the surface in most of Ling's realistic portraits and supplies a banquet for the eyes. He delicately leads us away from the reality and chaos of modern life, and plants us in his tenderised world of the provocative and the sublime.



ZHANG QIKAI

No art review would be complete without a visit to the strange world of the surreal. In fact, the work of Zhang Qikai is making an appearance at Marlborough Fine Art in London from May 29th to June 21st. His exhibition 'After the Jump', is expected to cause 'Panda-monium' (ahem) among the influential with his impressions of the endangered, bamboo-scoffing bear. The Panda is of course a national icon for China, Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing tragically hitting the news and capturing the hearts of millions during the seventies and eighties. Zhang is obviously fond of the breed; he 'bears' his soul in a series of the Panda posing in desperately isolated landscapes. It's not hard to envision the thinking behind this, the isolation of communist China for so many of the mature artist's years perhaps? In retrospect it seems foolish to try to dissect his thought process, he probably just loves Pandas and he's good at painting them. The detail on the fur is admittedly excellent. Whatever it is that drives Zhang, he is taken very seriously in many quarters, so the impact his art creates is very real.

It's an impact portrayed across the board as far as this fledgling modern art form goes. The high pace of development in China has not diminished since those early reform days, and the evolution of the local art scene has been just as powerful as the social reforms. With exhibitions free from the routine tyrannical lock-down and denunciations of the old regime, a modern dynasty of artists has erupted into expressive action. The public have reacted too; Chinese art is now aggressively collected by the Chinese themselves and this is a huge turn around. Those cunning, art-hungry observers and collectors, normally only happy with all things Western, have now turned to home, it's a massive heads up for the rest of the modern art world, and very fortunate for us that many western galleries have reacted so eagerly. It provides us all with an amazing opportunity to scrutinise this truly modern spectacle from the depths of the mysterious east. Perhaps this could help unlock some of the social barriers that politics, history and geography have raised, leading to an increased understanding and appreciation of a nation we really need to sit up and take notice of.