

Deborah Colton Gallery announces FotoFest exhibitions
March 7th to April 19th, 2008

China Under Construction II:
China's Contemporary Art of the Everyday Comes of Age

CANG Xin, CAO Fei, CUI Xiuwen, DAI Guangyu, GAO Brothers, HAN Bing, HEI Yue Ji Shengli, HONG Lei, HUANG Yan, JIAO Yingqi, MA Yongfeng, OU Ning, PENG Kailin, Qing Qing, QIU Zhijie, Rong Rong & Inri, TAO Aimin, The Contractors, Wanli (Mari), WENG Peijun (WENG Fen), WU Gaozhong, XU Yong & YU Na, ZENG Yicheng, ZHAN Wang, ZHAO Liang

Chinese contemporary art has reached a turning point and the artists in *China Under Construction II* are at the forefront of the new trajectory. In the early and mid-1990s, easily digestible, foreigner-pleasing formulas from China, such as Political Pop and Cynical Realism, captured the international art community's imagination. By the late 90s, however, growing numbers of Chinese artists, many born in the 70s, were unwilling to bow to foreign fancy in order to follow the previous generation's path to easy success. Images of a country attempting to carry out unprecedented and rapid economic "modernization" by political fiat have overtaken the old creative canons, bringing a more diverse generation of new Chinese contemporary art to the international stage. Through photography, video, sculpture, installation, and performance, *China Under Construction* examines the ways in which China is being constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed in this era of transnational flows of people, culture and capital, localized globalization, and so-called "modernization." The new generation of contemporary art in China rejects neat labels and gimmick gimmicks in favor of the messy, quotidian world. We live in fragmented times, times that need an art that offers not only a mirror in which to see the status quo, but also transforms our understandings of ourselves, giving us new ways of seeing who we are and can be. Explorations of the everyday lived connections between the individual and the social, the micro and the macro, and the local and global realities that we all, increasingly face in this rapidly changing world, imbue this new generation of Chinese art with unprecedented global relevance.

Maya Kóvskaya, is a Beijing-based art critic, curator and writer with over a decade of experience in China. She has curated contemporary art exhibitions and underground cultural events in North America and China including *Bitter Sea* (PRC, 1996), *Spaces of Appearance* (USA, 1997), *Cold Blooded* (PRC, 1998), *Post-Socialist Visions of Selfhood: Documents of the Beijing Underground* (USA, 2002), *Love in the Age of Big*

Construction (PRC and USA, 2006), *Quotidian Iconic* (co-curated, PRC, 2006), *The Other Shore of Desire* (USA, 2006) *Estrangements and Engagements* (Canada, 2006), *Misalignments* (USA, 2006), *Other Modernities* (USA, 2006), *The Fatalistic Language of Things* (USA, 2007), and *The Fragmented Gaze* (USA, 2007), and others. Her writing has appeared in English and Chinese in numerous art catalogues, academic volumes, journals, and magazines, including *Contemporary*, *Yishu: Journal Chinese Contemporary Art*, *Flash Art*, *ArtPost*, *Art iT*, *Art Map*, *Today Art*, *Art Management and Investment*, and *positions: east asia cultures critique*. She is currently writing a book on Chinese contemporary art and is a curatorial advisor to MoCA China.

Solo Exhibition: Suzanne Anker
Bio-Blurbs

"*Bio-Blurbs*" is the collective title of a sampling of several individual suites of digital photographs taken by Suzanne Anker from 2004-2007. Traversing the laboratory, the garden, a medical museum and a marketplace in Shanghai, China, this series of work draws on the transformation of matter through scientific investigation, botanical inquiry, and knowledge production discourses. As usual, Anker's work explores life/death continuums through various forms of life and in differing cultural contexts. The universal nomenclature of the scientific laboratory is contrasted with the subjectivity of living or once-living matter housed as specimens, species or even raw materials. Employing "straight" photography in some works and digital overlays in others, Ms. Anker's photographic suites are indicative of the broad range of her visual experience within a variety of the plastic arts. As a seminal figure in America's "sci/art" movement, Anker's work continues to probe the ways in which the intersection between science and art expands the way we see and know the world. In these works, the viewer is at once struck by their sensual and conceptual appeal, as color vibrates, light and form vaporize and the clinical transgresses into a narrative poesis. Of particular interest are her photographs of a rebirthing seed bank for endangered coral at research station in the Florida Keys. This collective project which began in 2004 will continue this year as part of her lecturing tour to Dundee, Prague, Berlin, Seoul, Tokyo, and Florence.

Suzanne Anker is an artist and theorist working at the intersection of Visual Art and the Life Sciences. Her work has been shown at such prestigious institutions as the Walker Art Center, the Smithsonian Institute, the Phillips Collection, P.S.1 Museum, the J.P. Getty Museum and the Museum of Modern Art in Japan. Her writings have appeared in *Art Journal*, *Tema Celeste*, *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*, *Leonardo*, *Art in America* and *Seed* magazines, in addition to being the co-author of *The Molecular Gaze: Art in the Genetic Age*. She has been a visiting artist and speaker at Yale University, the Royal Society of London, the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, the Max Plank Institute in Dresden, and at Shanghai University in China. Her radio program "The Bio-Blurb Show" on www.ps1.org is hosted by P.S.1 and MoMA in NYC. She is the recipient of many Honors and Awards including a forthcoming fellowship supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft in Berlin, Germany. She currently teaches at the School of Visual Arts where she is also Chair of the Fine Arts department.

Solo Exhibition: Michael Somoroff
The Absence of the Subject

In the aftermath of his historic installation at the Rothko Chapel and his recent solo exhibition at the Aldrich Museum, Michael Somoroff's latest body of work continues to explore his concern with the meta-physical foundations of reality.

With his exhibition *The Absence of the Subject*, Michael Somoroff creates a new series based on the seminal body of photographic work by German Photographer August Sander (born 1876). Sander documented the populace of Weimar Germany to show niches in a caste system of a supposedly democratic and freethinking republic. Using video installation, 3-D animation, and classical photography, this body of work is a complex inquiry into what the American sociologist Peter Berger calls "the social construction of reality". With the gesture of removing the subjects from August Sander's haunting and political body of portraiture, Somoroff illuminates the context of the lives, or "life force" of the subjects portrayed in Sander's portraits, thus catalyzing the perceptual essence of mortality and its relationship to the history of photography. This illuminated context then becomes the new subject and we are led to into the "optical unconscious" of Walter Benjamin (German philosopher, born 1892). The former portraits become landscapes, still lives and sublime voids within which the viewer can partake in a new journey. The resulting effect is often the unsettling feeling of wonderment and isolation, fundamental components in our collective desire for community.

The first artist to be invited to contribute to the campus of the Rothko Chapel since the installation of Barnett Newman's "Broken Obelisk" some thirty years ago, Michael Somoroff understands art to be a spiritual practice capable of aiding in self-realization. For over 20 years he has been devoted to social reform through the promotion of art as an essential community language. He regularly lectures internationally and collaborates with corporations and cultural institutions to create programs that use art as a means to improve cross cultural communication. His medium of choice includes photography, filmmaking, writing and a variety of "new media" technologies. He is the founder of the Matrix Art Collective, a full service art production facility in the New York metropolitan area. He is also a film director and a senior partner at MacGuffin Films, Ltd. As a member of The Director's Guild of America, Michael Somoroff has been the recipient of many important awards including a multiple winner of the AICP, Museum of Modern Art Award, numerous Gold Lion's – Cannes Festival, and The Kodak book prize in 1986. His work has been distinguished by such noteworthy art critics as Donald Kuspit and David Anfam and highlighted in many important publications such as The New York Times, Art Forum, Vogue, Art Investor, Sculpture Magazine, Per Contra, Contemporary magazine, Artnet, Surface magazine.

Michael Somoroff is represented in many important collections which include the Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and The Smithsonian, Washington DC. His works have been exhibited world-wide, including the International Center for Photography, New York, The Los Angeles Country Museum, The San Francisco Museum of Art, The Museum of Contemporary Arts of Chicago and The Frankfurt Kunstverein, Frankfurt, Germany and "The Great Color Exhibition" of 1986 curated by Manfred Heiting in K'In, Germany and most recently at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut.

Joe C. Aker
Tibetan Transformation
The Annex of Deborah Colton Gallery

Transformation is defined as the act or process of transforming a change in form, appearance, nature or character. Transformation can be a wonder or a curse – depending upon whether the people or places want to be changed. Joe Aker explores this concept within the context of life in Tibet in present times.

Joe Aker is a nationally recognized architectural photographer based in Houston, Texas. His works have appeared in *Rafael Moneo: Audrey Jones Beck Building* (Edition Axel Menges, 2000) on the addition to the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, major architectural journals and many mainstream magazines and newspapers including the *New York Times*, *Time*, *Architecture*, *Interior Design* and *Lux* magazine. The Houston Chapter of the American Institute of Architects named him in 2007 as “Artist of the Year”.

THE GALLERY

The vision of the Deborah Colton Gallery originated with the representation of select Asian and European artists while Deborah Colton lived throughout Asia from 1993 until the millennium. Opening the 2500 Summer Street Houston gallery space during FotoFest of 2004, the Deborah Colton Gallery is founded on being an innovative showcase for ongoing presentation and promotion of strong historical and visionary contemporary artists world-wide, whose diverse practices include painting, works on paper, sculpture, video, photography, and conceptual future media installations. The gallery aspires to provide a forum through connecting Texas, national and international artists to make positive change.

Please contact Deborah Colton directly with any questions:

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