

Social Change in Contemporary Chinese Art

Dr. Ken Jassie

Responses to the Cultural Revolution

“10 Lost Years” (1966-76)

- Wang Guangyi (b. 1957)
- Shi Xinning (b. 1969)
- Yue Minjun (b. 1962)



b.1957

Wang Guangyi, Great Criticism Series (1990-2007)

- In this iconic art, he fuses “political propaganda of the Cultural Revolution with the aesthetics of American Pop Art.”
- He seems to make the point that “political and commercial propaganda” are both forms of brainwashing.

Wang Guangyi,
Face of the Believer,
Lithograph, 2003



PEPSI



Inversion of Socialist Realism

Engagement with Western Art Movements



The Yalta Conference Reconfigured (2006)



Shi Xinning, b.1969

“Chinafication” of the World

by Shi Xinning

- On the one hand, the artist has found a post-modern way to amusingly subvert and comment on the way that dictators falsify history.
- Still, the “visual memory” of Mao is a source of ambivalence, involving pride and not a little absurdity.

Marilyn Monroe, Joe DiMaggio & Mao!





Chairman Mao on Marcel Duchamp's Fountain...

Yue Minjun, b.1962



Cynical Realism, or a way to represent contemporary China's "tumultuous experience."

Why are they smiling?



“To mask feelings of helplessness”?

Not a laughing matter?

(“A sinister terror lurks behind the manic grin.”)



Yue Minjun, *Execution* (1995)

[See Edouard Manet's *Execution of Emperor Maximilian* (1867)]

Chinese Art Goes Global

Cai Guo-Qiang (b.1957)

“I Want To Believe”

Guggenheim Museum,

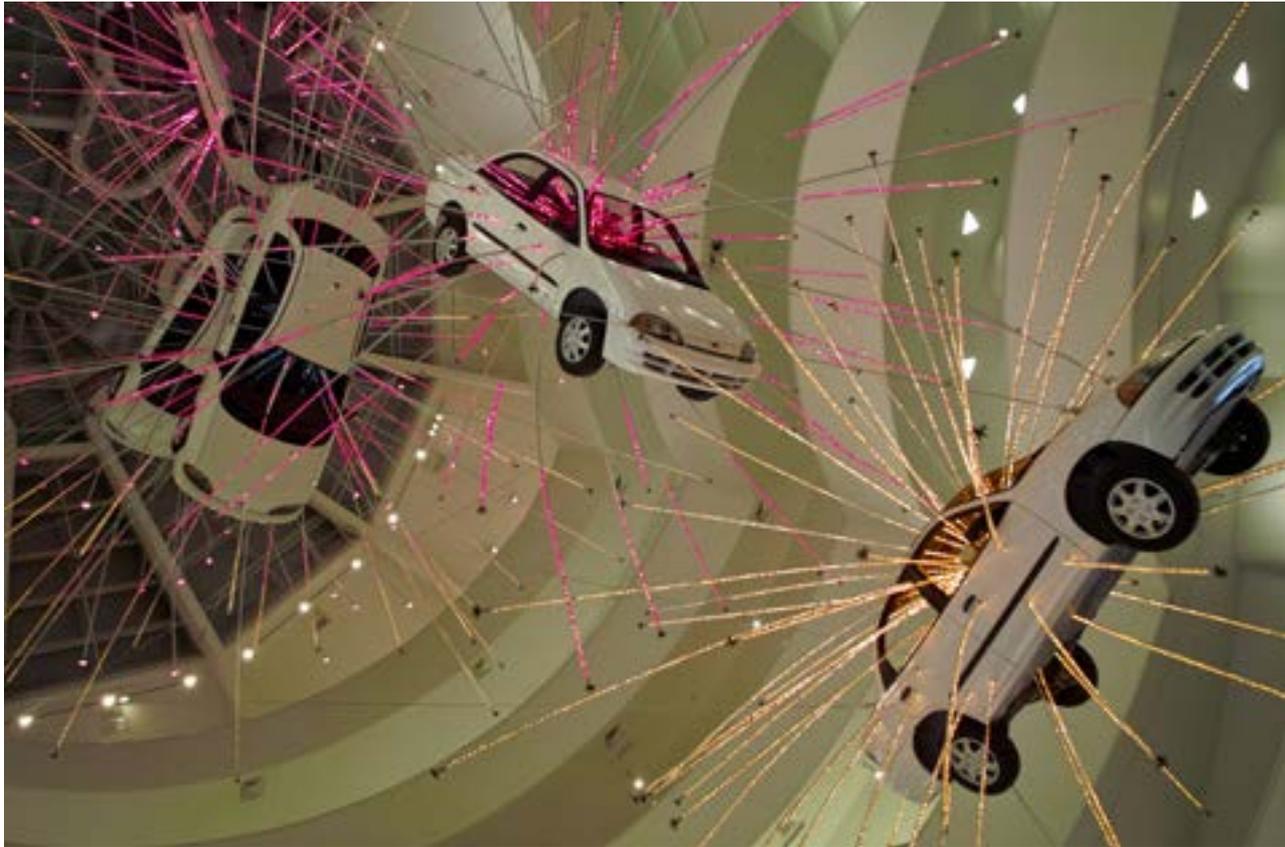
New York

February 22-May 28, 2008



Cai Guo-Qiang, Inopportune: Stage One (2008)

“Performance/Installation art with a literal explosive impact.”



Detail from “Inopportune: Stage One”

Conceptual Art: “Contradictions involved in perceptions of beauty and violence.”



Installation view from “Inopportune: Stage Two” (2004),
North Adams, Massachusetts



Head On (2006) Berlin, Germany

Is it humanity's "fate to repeat [its] mistakes unthinkingly"?



Ai Weiwei (b.1957)

- **China is at a 'critical point.'**
- The only way to maintain the economic momentum is to set the foundations for more creativity and competition by opening up Chinese society, a direction the government is "openly refusing to go in."