

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS

Dear Hong Kong...

March 17 - July 15 2020

18, rue du Bourg Tibourg
75004 Paris



Wang Keping
Couple à l'enfant, 2018
Wood carving / Acacia
17 x 20 x 11 in. (45 x 52 x 28 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Bruxelles

Having participated in Art Basel Hong Kong since 2013, a fair that quickly became a major player on Asia's artistic scene, Galerie Nathalie Obadia decided to exhibit, in one of its two Parisian spaces, the works it had intended to present in the 2020 edition, which was unfortunately canceled due to the Coronavirus epidemic. This presentation is an extension of Art Basel's initiative, Online Viewing Rooms, which aims to give participating galleries the possibility of promoting the works that were supposed to be shown on their stands. It seemed a shame not to exhibit what we had chosen with the artists and the estate of Agnès Varda. Thus, we decided to install the stand, exactly as we'd imagined it, to dampen our regret at not being in Hong Kong this spring.

This group exhibition is the occasion to promote the ties that the gallery has woven with the art scene of China and the broader Asia-Pacific region, which it deeply wants to support via collaborations and cultural exchanges that have multiplied in recent years. Chinese artists Lu Chao, Wang Keping and Ni Youyu are thus given the place of honor in a hanging that also spotlights works by Brook Andrew, Rina Banerjee and Manuel Ocampo, originally from Australia, India and the Philippines, respectively.

A few years separate Lu Chao and Ni Youyu, who incarnate the vitality of a young generation of Chinese artists, whose international careers are as attached to their cultural roots as they are open to the most foreign and varied of aesthetic forms, characteristic of today's art. In the background, these artists demonstrate a will to rediscover a rich legacy through a syncretic approach that is resolutely anchored in its time.

Born in 1988, in Shenyang, in the province of Liaoning, China, Lu Chao lives and works in London where he has developed a superb body of paintings, in an essentially black and white palette, marked by both Eastern and Western inspirations. The juvenile impressions of his homeland inspired the artist to create a metaphorical work, somewhere between traditional Chinese painting and German romanticism. The relationship between the individual and the masses, the feeling of loneliness in the midst of a group, the concepts of solid and void derived from a type of zen ideology, are at the heart of his oeuvre: "[...] I've always been very sensitive to crowds of people who jostle each other, these images of depressed, vulnerable and impotent crowds that accompanied me as I grew up. [...] I always thought that each face could tell a story, the story of a recent experience or even of an event about to happen. Every figure in my paintings is a response to every stranger I crossed paths with in my life." The artist's statement takes on a particular connotation in light of the current health situation.

Ni Youyu joined the gallery after an exhibition on "Ink Art," in 2015, which aimed to shed light on certain key figures of this scene from China, where the practice of ink painting is emblematic of the dialogue between tradition and modernity. In Ni Youyu's work, there is the same willingness to connect Eastern and Western influences, as well as classic and contemporary concepts. Born in 1984, in the Jiangxi province, Ni Youyu also studied ink painting at the Institute of Visual Arts in Shanghai, where he still resides part of the year. Underpinned by a reflection on the aesthetic conventions that forge the history of art and its market, his protean oeuvre draws, today, as much from calligraphy, Asian gardens and Zen philosophy, as it does from Greco-Roman antiquity, contemporary history and the major figures of Western art such as Marcel Duchamp and Thomas Ruff.

The gallery is also delighted to have represented Wang Keping since 2017. Keping is one of the founders of Chinese contemporary art, notably due to the key role he played during China's cultural revolution in the 1970s. Born in 1949, he is one of the protagonists of the Stars Art Group (Xing Xing), which celebrated its 40th anniversary last fall. Following early years marked by political engagement, Wang Keping sought exile in France, where he has since dedicated himself entirely to sculpture. In an aesthetic and spiritual search, inspired by Taoist philosophy, antique statuary from the Han dynasty or the popular art of rural China, but also by the great masters of sculpture like Constantin Brancusi, Wang Keping has made nature his main formal matrix and wood carving, in particular, an artform that coincides with a quest for purity and timelessness.

We also pay homage to Agnès Varda by presenting original prints from the series she realized in China in 1957. Invited by the Chinese government, along with a French delegation of eight people, the young photographer shows great humanity in the way she gazes on scenes of daily life, at the dawn of the Great Leap Forward. Toiling workers, schools letting out, floating villages, families and children are photographed with a sincerity and kindness that are far from espousing the aesthetic standards advocated, at the time, by the official propaganda of Socialist Realism. This series was presented in China for the first time in 2012, during an exhibition dedicated to Agnès Varda at Beijing's CAFA Museum.

Western civilization and its ties to colonialism are at the heart of Brook Andrew's research. Born in Sydney, in 1970, the artist is considered to be one of the key figures of the Asia-Pacific art scene, all the more with the upcoming 2020 Biennale of Sydney of which he is the artistic director. Through meticulous research, study and archiving, Brook Andrew builds a multidisciplinary work centered on the notions of history, memory, commemoration and modernity, with the objective of triggering a discussion on the legacy of imperialistic ideologies and the complexity of ties between populations and culture – which he strives to translate as accurately as possible in his work filled with juxtapositions and assemblages.

Multiculturalism is an essential dimension in the artistic practice of Rina Banerjee, who is also sensitive to the relationship between East and West, herself originally from India and currently residing in New York. The different cultures she encounters, crosses paths with, resuscitates, constitute a reservoir of images, senses and symbols that is as fertile as her country of origin. In a world where exchanges are constant and infinite, her chimeric sculptures appear as a point of convergence for a multitude of flows, crossings and migratory movements, on the border between nature and civilization. Reading between the lines, the main issue is the threat to biodiversity and the future of mankind, as reflected in the fragility of the diverse materials she uses in her assemblages. Her delicate paintings are full of colorful motifs and mysterious, dreamlike biomorphic figures, marked by the influence of ancient Asian art. Rina Banerjee is at the moment the subject of a traveling retrospective in the United States.

The burlesque and iconoclastic paintings of Manuel Ocampo, born in 1965, in Quezon City, Philippines, complete the hanging. The artist, who is now based in Manila and represented his country in the 57th Biennale of Venice (2017), has, since the 1980s, developed a particularly singular visual language, filled with a refreshing insolence and gripping plurality. His work brings together symbols from colonialist iconography, popular art, Judeo-Christian civilization, Spanish Catholicism, Manila's underground culture, naïve art, comics, graffiti and Mexican ex-votos, or even science fiction – the aforementioned elements are combined in subversive and parodic compositions, Dadaist at heart.

Paris Bourg-Tibourg	Paris Cloître Saint-Merri	Brussels
Evolving exhibition <i>Dear Hong Kong...</i> March 18 - July 15 2020	Evolving exhibition May 21 - July 31 2020 --	Hoda Kashiha <i>Dear St. Agatha, I am witnessing your tears in the land of tulips</i> May 30 - July 11 2020
	Paris Cloître Saint-Merri II	
	Jérôme Zonder <i>Etudes pour le portrait de Pierre-François</i> June 6 - July 31 2020	

For press inquiries, please contact: Eva Ben Dhiab
evab@nathalieobadia.com / + 33 (0) 1 53 01 99 76

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