

## NEW BEIJING: Young Painting from China

Chen Hongzhu - Liu Guangguang

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What is it like to grow up in the China of today - to come of age at the same time as your country steps forward as a major world superpower? Being a young adult in China now means being exposed to choices and lifestyles that your parents never dreamt of. It means being influenced by Western culture - and by Western values. It also means that you, and all your friends, are the product of the one child policy: a generation of only children, facing a world of change and uncertainty.

*New Beijing* takes a snapshot of this New World Order through two young artists at the cutting edge of this post-80s generation: Chen Hongzhu and Liu Guangguang. These painters explore issues that are changing the shape of the Chinese contemporary art market, and as such the show gives a unique insight into the shifting of the sands in this most exciting of art scenes.

**Chen Hongzhu** is one of the New Generation of Chinese women. Confident and rebellious, she graduated from the prestigious Central Academy of Fine Arts, and her work has already been picked up by the Chinese contemporary uber-collector Uli Sigg. Influenced by American painters such as Mark Ryden and John Currin, her zoomorphic self-portraits meld surrealism with self-examination. They depict seemingly perfect porcelain dolls that are nevertheless damaged & fragile, the cuts and dripping blood on the otherwise pristine bunnies hinting at traumas faced and survived. Her paintings suggest a tragedy in beauty, a disappointed innocence, but also a steely determination - disillusionment, yes, but also a persistence to carry on.

**Liu Guangguang's** paintings depict young Chinese who dress up in animal suits and costumes, playing with identities but still disjointed and unsettled. Dazed and confused, his subjects stare out at the viewer as if gazing into the void. At every turn they find themselves in cold, stark environments that offer little in the way of comfort or homeliness. It is as if choice in identities has only served to create an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity for his lone, lost adolescents. Liu draws a distinct parallel between the experience of coming-of-age as a young adult, and the current condition of Chinese youth society, coming to terms with its new, more open position in the global order and attempting to find some means of orientation. Liu Guangguang is a graduate of Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts.

Both artists address the themes of how Chinese youth grapple with an open consumer society - with choice, options, expendable cash and pop culture... all the trappings that were unknown to their parents' generation. In their stark portraits of fractured innocence, it is as if the optimism of pop is corrupted by the pressure to make life choices without any guidance or values. Unlike their predecessors, these Chinese paintings are less about politics, and more about individualism - an exploration of how Western values take root in a communist context. The previous generation of Chinese artists defined their vulnerability in opposition to the state; this post-80s generation looks to the expanse of "choice" that the New World Order has delivered, and the sea of uncertainty that it has placed them in.

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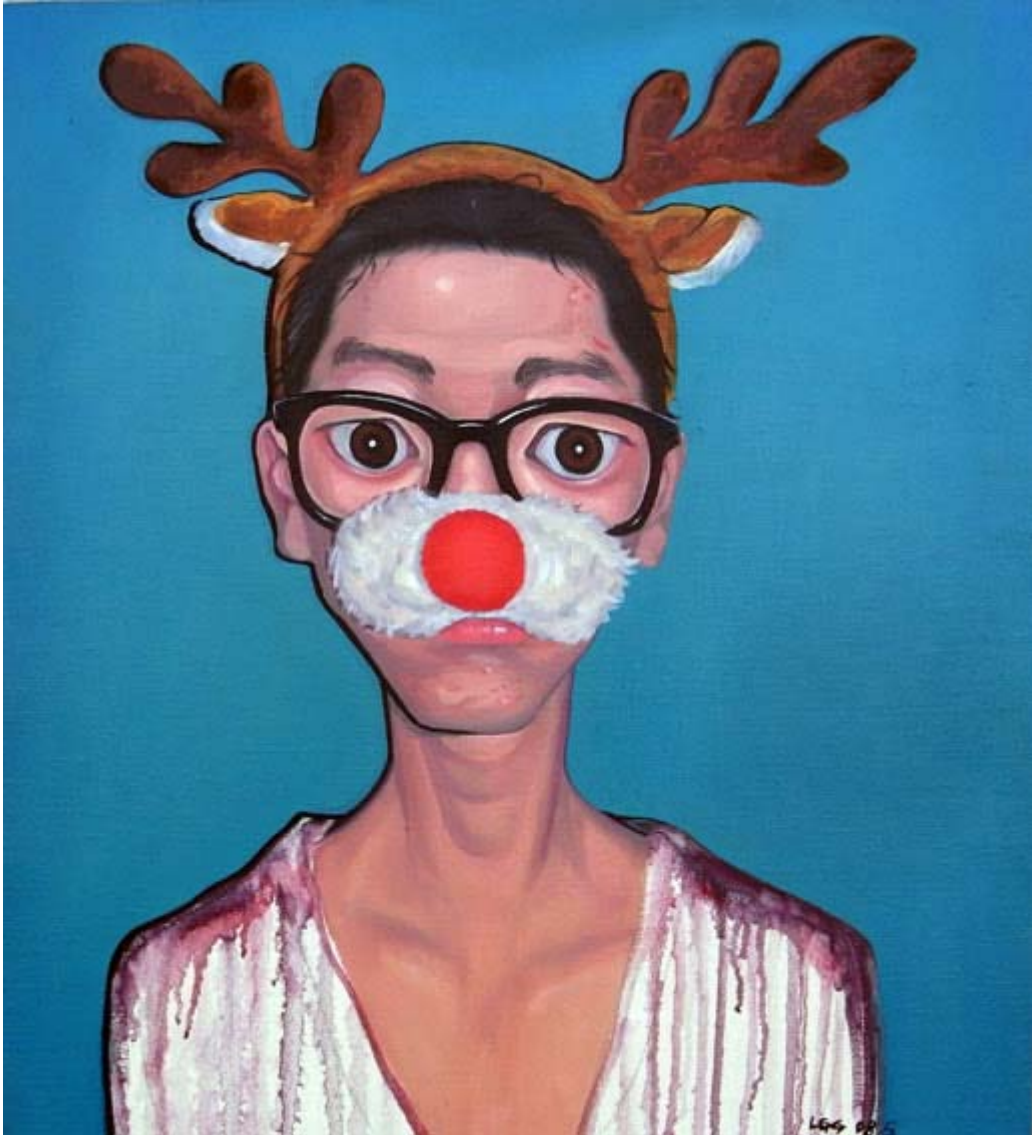
Chen Hongzhu  
"What is Memory No. 1"  
Oil on canvas, 2010  
160cm x 110cm



Liu Guangguang  
"I am in the pond"  
Oil on canvas, 2009  
110cm x 140cm



Chen Hongzhu  
"Someone's Perfect Weather"  
Oil on canvas, 2010  
50cm x 50cm



Liu Guangguang  
"One inch photo"  
Oil on canvas, 2009  
55cm x 55cm