



Coprorate - (Erected),
2016, Genuine and artificial leather, BDSM accessories, foam, metal, wood, 98 3/8 x 110 3/16 x 13 3/4 in.

533 W26 ST NYC | SEP 8 – OCT 8 2016

Xu Zhen

OPENING RECEPTION: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 6–8 PM

James Cohan is pleased to present a solo exhibition by the multi-disciplinary Chinese artist Xu Zhen. This will be the third exhibition of work by Xu Zhen at James Cohan and the largest presentation of his art in New York since 2009. The show will be on view from September 8 to October 8, 2016 with an opening reception from 6-8 PM on Thursday, September 8.

Xu works within many different media and thematic structures, making him an enigmatic yet groundbreaking figure in Chinese contemporary art – a role that he gleefully accepts. In 2009 Xu Zhen subsumed his individual artistic identity and transformed into MadeIn – an “art creation company.” Subsequently in 2013, MadeIn launched a brand – Xu Zhen, redundantly making Xu a product of his own corporation. Of his work, Hans-Ulrich Obrist, director of the Serpentine Galleries, London, writes, “Xu’s sociopolitical appraisals distance him from the herd of contemporary Chinese artists. And the breadth of his practice, in all its seeming spontaneity and surprising inflections and turns, only complicates the attempt to pin him down to any single position within his country’s art scene—or, indeed, within cultural production at large.” The works in this exhibition

533 West 26 St
New York NY 10001
291 Grand St
New York NY 10002
+1 212 714 9500
info@jamescohan.com
jamescohan.com

examine the human experience of pain, pleasure and desire as well as the aesthetic manipulation of consumers in late capitalist societies.

The exhibition will present a large-scale sculpture from the *Eternity* series, Xu's 1998 film *Rainbow*, selections from his *Under Heaven* paintings and a new wall installation, *Corporate - (Erected)*, produced this year. Xu's oeuvre questions the validity of an East-West dichotomy with great skepticism. Xu's *Eternity* sculptures are a mash-up of Hellenistic and Buddhist statuary, creating three-dimensional, transcultural exquisite corpses. The result is a deftly composed work that carries the weight of history, yet acts as a sly statement about global similarities and differences.

In *Rainbow*, which premiered at the 49th Venice Biennale in 2001, a bare back fills the screen and is repeatedly slapped until the skin turns an alarming shade of red. Although the slapping is audible, the hands themselves were removed through editing. The result is a visceral, aestheticized portrait of pain and endurance.

In contrast to *Rainbow*, the paintings from Xu's ongoing *Under Heaven* series are a voluptuary dream. He applies a thick layer of oil paint to a canvas and then forms delicate petals and flowers using a cake decorator. The resulting impasto creates a striking relief, tempting the viewer to touch or even taste. The expansive title, *Under Heaven*, is a literal translation of a Chinese word meaning "the whole world." The sumptuous surfaces as well as the allusive title make the works an intense sensual experience.

Corporate - (Erected) is a large-scale wall sculpture incorporating ready-made S&M paraphernalia. From afar, the work appears to be an exercise in gothic formalism; however, upon closer inspection it becomes clear that it is an assemblage of leather accessories and erotic toys. Xu intends the viewer to project his or her own cultural associations onto the sculpture and experience its meaning and associations in a very subjective way. Rarefying these salacious objects in a fine art evokes the idea of sexual pleasure – perhaps to an uncomfortable extent.

The works in this exhibition, united in their lush, eye-catching aesthetics, are representative of three primal human sensations – pain, pleasure and desire – and reveal how these emotions are consistently manipulated by the images that surround us.

Born in 1977, Xu Zhen has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Kunsthau Graz, Austria (2015); Long Museum, Shanghai, China (2015); Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China (2014); the Minsheng Museum, Shanghai, China (2012); Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland (2011); and S.M.A.K., Gent, Belgium (2009); as well as major international group exhibitions such as 20th Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2016); *Chinese artists at a time of Turbulence and Transformation*, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2016); *Contemporary Art from China*, Qatar Museums Gallery Al Riwaq, Doha, Qatar (2016) and New Collection, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2015) *15 Rooms*, co-curated by Klaus Biesenbach and Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Art Basel (2014); the 12th Biennale de Lyon (2013); Art of Change, Hayward Gallery, UK (2012); Performa07, New York (2007); the 10th International Istanbul Biennial (2007). He was also included in the 49th Venice Biennale (2001), and the 51st Venice Biennale (2005). He lives and works in Shanghai.

For press inquiries, please contact Jeffrey Waldron at jwaldron@jamescohan.com or 212-714-9500.

For other inquiries, please contact Yvonne Zhou at yzhou@jamescohan.com or at 212-714-9500.