

Mao Tongqiang – *Mirage*



Mirage Series No. 16, Oil on Canvas 120*150cm, 2006

Opening Reception:

Saturday 10th March, 6pm

Duration:

06th March – 08th April 2007

Venue:

SHiNE Art Space

(Block 9, No. 50 Moganshan Lu,
Shanghai)

Opening Hours:

10am-6pm (Tuesday to Sunday)

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“What is in vogue today is no more than mere history tomorrow.” - Mao Tongqiang

Mao Tongqiang has continually shown concern for the facile nature of modern society, this being intertwined with an acute awareness of passing time and the manner in which it renders everything insignificant. In the *Mirage* series the artist depicts mountain scenes that would be traditional Chinese landscape paintings were it not for the psychedelic colours that he uses. Then, rising from the atmospheric mist of the foreground, the artist depicts a discordant mix of characters that differ greatly in their pursuits and date of origin. They appear to belong in the nonsensical imagery of a dream; a concept which relates to the title of the series. Living in the far flung city of Yinchuan, a province of extreme temperatures and a hostile desert landscape, Mao Tongqiang is familiar with the visual trickery of the mirage and has adopted it as a metaphor for the idealised façade that he sees developing in contemporary society. To him, the visible surface of society, the image of order and happiness that is portrayed, does not reflect the reality that lies beneath. It is for this reason that Mao depicts the fashions, the frippery, the daring deeds, the politicians full of empty promises, the Christmas trees and the fire works that are all ‘gloss’; the successful, progressive and happy image of China that people wish to project. Mao reflects in these works upon a society that has moved incredibly fast and made gargantuan efforts to attain certain levels and signifiers of progress. As this has been a forced and not a natural development however, there remains a lack of cultural substance behind the adopted amiable surface, fewer ties to the past and no reliable social infrastructure to hold it in place. Mao sees it as a mere mirage; a fleeting inconsequential facade which will in time be washed away and replaced by another prevailing ideal.

Mao Tongqiang was born in 1960 in Yinchuan where he lives today. He graduated in 1980 from the Fine Arts Department of Ning Xia University and continued his advanced training at Zhe Jiang Fine Arts Academy. The artist has exhibited in France, Austria and Indonesia with his most recent solo exhibition being *Mirage* in Singapore last year.