

Dicoria

Aug 3 — Oct 20, 2024 | Long Museum West Bund, Shanghai, China

Curated by Zhu Zhu, the exhibition presents more than 40 works by the artist from 2005 to the present, including his early to recent series such as *Spot the Difference*, *Images of Mutual Undoing and Unity*, *Window* and *Framed Paintings*.

Li Qing's artistic journey begins with painting, yet from the outset of his career, he has never confined himself to simply replication or expression. Instead, he enters into a mediation of the paint medium itself, seeking to "create an event between images and paintings." By altering the path of viewing, he shapes the relational aesthetics between the audience and the artwork. Two of his painting series, *Spot the Difference* and *Images of Mutual Undoing and Unity* primarily employ a diptych format, where mirrored similarities introduce a playful element, a paradoxical rhetoric, namely the mutual "painting" and deconstruction of images. This interplay encourages viewers to contemplate the unpredictability of knowledge and the possible truths behind it.

Born in the early 1980s, Li Qing grew up during a period of significant transformation in China. The rapid modernization process brought profound changes to urban spaces and media technology, which had an impact on society as a whole. His recent later series *Windows* and *Framed Paintings*, involve hand-painting window frames from demolished old buildings and utilizing collage techniques with images and text. These works correspond to the life experiences that transform individuals and collective memories. According to Li Qing, "The landscapes I depict behind the window grids focus on the striking aspects of the city, whether past or future. They suggest a spectacle-like nature, a form of heterotopia, while the windows themselves allude to the vanishing aspect of the mundane, where differences in socio-economic and identity collide."

These works exhibit traces of social development and layers of ideology while imbuing them with a profound sense of history and time: "This is the gaze of those who have vanished, looking back at what remains." Here, the window frame becomes a narrative interface, merging the dual portraits of memory and reality. Mirroring his exploration of Shanghai, a megacity that has showcased the clash of modernization and multiculturalism since colonial times, these works provide a rich context and wide-ranging references for his reflections on local and regional identity. As Michele D'Aurizio notes, "Only artists who place themselves both within and outside of history, within and outside of China, can document this process."

Li Qing's series of works marks the transition of his identity from painter to artist. Painting remains a vital tool, but relinquishes the purity and self-sufficiency of the medium. For him, the enduring intrinsic logic of creation lies in the tension created by the overlay and flux of images. As though he were blessed with natural double pupils (dicoria), he sees time and space as the fundamental perspectives and principles for creating images.

— Zhu Zhu, poet, curator, and art critic