

Jade Branch

A He An's solo exhibition

Curator: Lee Ambrozy

Opening: 2018.12.22, 16:00

Duration::2018.12.22 - 2019.02.20

Tang Contemporary Art Beijing 2nd Space

On December 22, 2018, Tang Contemporary Art Beijing opens He An's solo exhibition "Jade Branch." Demonstrating the gallery's commitment to supporting avant garde art practices in China, "Jade Branch" marks the artist's third solo project with the gallery since 2011 and is an continuation of He An's creative practice of improvisational interventions using raw materials in space.

He An is concerned with urbanism, architecture and spatial politics and draws poetics from literature, religion and deeply biographical experiences. His recent investigations into sensorial art—works that simultaneously and antithetically radiate hot and cold—are represented here with one of two major installations, "Dark Purple". Using a mechanized apparatus "Dark Purple" delivers the impossible state of red hot steel adjacent frosty ice, expanding art viewing beyond mere visual or aesthetic approaches.

The titular installation, Jade Branch, is an immersive architectural installation work realized at last after three years of development. This semi-biographical work highlights its own materiality, and uses light, water, and gravity to create a four-dimensional space that delivers heightened perceptions of time and space while making oblique commentary on urban settlements and social disparity.

Craft, manufacture and tradesmen form the core of He An's practice, making medium and materiality are of paramount importance in untangling He An's work. Renowned for his unique language using neon signs—some stolen, others dropped, and still others stretched out into hieroglyphic curvilinear forms—his neon works merge the classic beauty of Chinese writing with the cool modernity of typeface and industrial design. Yet neon lights are merely a vehicle for his more esoteric use of light as medium. He An's practice is more insightful than the fractured beauty and luminescence that neon lights can afford.

He An encrypts social commentary in vernacular mediums, such as concrete, steel, and oil—all which are in attendance in this exhibition. For "Jade Branch" he debuts a new medium and mode of manufacture, one that embraces manufacturing technology unchanged since the time of the Silk Road and which echos the themes of domestic architecture and class—silk carpets.

The deeper concerns and meditations present in He An's practice can only evidenced in his solo exhibitions and installation works. These are integral structured environments whose spatial considerations have been carefully strategized by the artist, often in improvisational and spontaneous processes. The lofty industrial bauhaus-inspired space of Tang Contemporary Art's Second Beijing gallery provides the perfect architectural shell and metaphysical environment to experience the results of the artist's creative process. He dissolves linear, two-dimensional time and supplants it with a trajectory modeled on his bodily movements, the improvisational movements of the artist, his tradesmen, and those around him.

He An is an everyday alchemist. His finished environments are places of escape, inviting an entirely different mode of viewing with their charged/energized spaces. To experience his solo exhibition is to unravel a thread that has been carefully woven into space and negative space. His environments are poetic and transformational, self-mythologizing but truly Everyman in their aesthetic.

"Jade Branch" is an elegy inscribed in space.

The exhibition runs through February 20, 2019 and is accompanied by a complete retrospective catalog with curator's critical text.

Text / Curator Lee Ambrozy

About Artist

He An, born in 1970 in Wuhan, and studied in the Hubei Institute of Fine Arts. His practice covers various media, often combining industrial materials to create site-specific installations filled with narrations. He presented solo exhibitions worldwide including: Australian Center for Contemporary Art (2017), Daniel Templon Galerie, Belgium (2014), Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (2009), Tang Contemporary Art (2015, 2011). He was also part of numerous major group exhibitions, such as: Overpop (Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China, 2016), Post Pop: East Meets West (Saatchi Gallery, London, U.K., 2014), Carnegie International (Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, U.S.A., 2013), Rendez-Vous 2008 (Museum of Contemporary Art Lyon, Lyon, France, 2008), The Real Thing: Contemporary from Art China (Tate Liverpool, Liverpool, U.K., 2007), etc.

About Curator

Lee Ambrozy is an art historian and curator living and working between New York and Asia. A former editor at Artforum's Chinese and English websites, her writing has appeared in several magazines and journals. Currently a Ph.D. candidate in Chinese Art History and Archaeology at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, her editorial work includes Inside and Outside the White Cube: Artforum Fifty Years of Art Criticism (Sanlian Books, 2017) and Ai Weiwei's Blog (MIT Press, 2011). Her current research examines urbanism, material and visual culture from the late Tang through the Northern Song.