

# Kunstmuseum Bern

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Press release  
To the culture media  
05.02.2007

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Window on China in the Museum of Fine Arts Bern: Liu Ye and Ji Dachun, February 7 to April 1, 2007

## Two worlds: the masterly bizarre and the grotesquely surreal

This year's Window on China will be showing two solo exhibitions by Chinese artists of the middle generation. Liu Ye's artistic world appears superficially childlike at first, but then proves to be anything but naïve. His masterly paintings often have a bizarre touch. Ji Dachun astounds with strange combinations of figures and objects against a white background. His individual aesthetic is marked by a grotesque sense of humour. The works being shown by both artists are from the Sigg Collection and other private collections.

As a continuation of the collaboration with the collectors Ueli and Rita Sigg, following on from the successful exhibition in 2005: *Mahjong. Contemporary Chinese Art from the Sigg Collection*, there will be an annual Window on China in the Museum of Fine Arts Bern. Last year works from artists from Canton were on show; this year, two artists from the middle generation will be presented: Liu Ye and Ji Dachun.

**Liu Ye** lives in Peking where he was born in 1964. He is one of the few artists who travel regularly between Europe (Germany, Holland and England) and China which has allowed him, as he expresses it, "to concentrate on oneself". Liu's childhood, socially influenced by the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and visually by kitsch propaganda art, has brought forth an artistic world that at first appears childlike, but then proves to be anything but naïve. It is marked by early memories, fairytales and childlike concepts of happiness. In his work, Liu attempts to combine the imagination and sensitivity of the fairytale with the strict and rational thought of philosophy. Thus, in vibrant colours, he juxtaposes the disasters of world history with the figures of winged boys and girls, a ship going down in a hail of bombs being saluted by a toy sailor. His mixture of phantasy and reality approaches, sometimes bizarrely, close to kitsch – if the masterly style and the sophisticated composition did not prove that a conscious artist is at work here.

In the case of **Ji Dachun**, this exhibition is his first solo presentation outside Asia. Ji Dachun was born in 1968 in Nantong (Jinagsu Province) and lives and works in Peking. In his paintings and drawings he combines Chinese tradition and Western modernism in an ironic and sometimes humorous cocktail. The things he depicts are all everyday objects, but his works give us a new point of view on things by confronting us with singular combinations of figures and objects, whimsical images or unusual perspectives. He centres objects or figures carefully on a white background, sometimes two objects or people in a dialogue. The broad empty space is always an important element of the composition. Surrealistic moments always play a part and sometimes what appears naïve is transformed into sarcasm. For Ji Dachun, there is nothing that can't be depicted, nothing that can't be combined with something else. His works often show a grotesque sense of humour. For instance, he will paint an unbelievably long banana, writhing like a snake; Picasso with a runny nose; a teddy bear copulating with a pig; a dried indigo root or a scholar's rock thrusting like a phallus sideways into the picture. The painter shows no respect for his subjects, but does unequivocally for painting, which is always exemplary, either extremely precise or apparently cleverly "dashed off". Ji's art takes a very individual place in a Chinese context. It seems as though he has playfully developed an individual aesthetic.

In addition to works from the Sigg Collection, works from other private collections are on exhibit. A catalogue will be published in German and English for each exhibition. Both artists have collaborated actively on the exhibition concept and the catalogues and will be present at the opening.

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## **Exhibition dates**

February 7 until April 1, 2007

## **Opening (The artists will be present)**

February 6, 2007, 6.30pm

## **Entrance**

CHF 12.- / 8.-

## **Catalogues**

A catalogue in German, English and Chinese will be published for the exhibition of Liu Ye:

Liu Ye, published by the Museum of Fine Arts Bern and timezone 8, Beijing, 2007;

136 pp., 21 x 14 cm, numerous coloured illustrations, texts by Bernhard Fibicher and Zhu Zhu. CHF 20.-

A catalogue in German, English and Chinese will be published for the exhibition of Ji Dachun:

Ji Dachun, published by the Museum of Fine Arts Bern and timezone 8, Beijing, 2007;

98 pp., 25.5 x 21 cm, numerous coloured illustrations, texts by Bernhard Fibicher, Pi Li, Zhao Li. CHF 25.-

*The two catalogues are available for free for journalists during the opening on February 6, 6.30pm*