

Liu Wei at Long Museum (West Bund)

Artist: Liu Wei

Venue: Long Museum (West Bund), Shanghai

Exhibition Title: Liu Wei: 散场/OVER

Date: November 11, 2020 – January 17, 2021

Images courtesy of Long March Space and Liu Wei Studio

Link: <http://www.thelongmuseum.org/en/exhibition-369/detail-1692.html>

Press Release

散场(*sàn chǎng*): (of a theatre, cinema, etc.) empty after the show.

The New Chinese-English Dictionary

The Long Museum will present a large-scale solo exhibition, *Liu Wei: 散场/OVER*, from November 11, 2020 to January 17, 2021. The exhibition is one of China's most anticipated of the year, showcasing recent installations, sculptures, and paintings from the established artist Liu Wei.

散场/*OVER* represents Liu's personal reflections on the unique moment in human history that is the year 2020. The artist transforms the Long Museum (West Bund) into a distant theater elevated above time and space, wherein the concepts, systems, and other causal relations of the world at this moment are thrown into a temporal vortex, resulting in Liu's utterly original sculptures; a connecting theater of matters, figures, images, movement, and "void;" two or three dimensional "landscapes" of materials, colors, and lines; and a microcosm of the world's current order called "microworld."

The 2,800 square meters of exhibition space opens with a prelude, *Dark Matter* (2008/2020) — a site-specific installation representing hidden and invisible existence, in which one side leads to the earth and the other to the cosmos. Structurally, the entire exhibition pivots on its largest spatial installation, *1,098.1 Tons Desert* (2020), wherein sand and desert serve as material and landscape indicators, drawing the viewer's attention to the core regions of the world's political, economic, and cultural conflicts — the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia, thus shedding light on land, capitalism, colonization, trade, and even climate issues. These become the key elements of 散场/*OVER* (2020), the central work of the exhibition.

散场/*OVER* is a large-scale installation that combines elements of sculpture, video, and painting. Through a serious yet playful performative scenarios, it showcases two types of consciousness and power — the progressive ideal of futurism, communism, and suprematism, and the capitalist world order shaped by colonialism and imperialism — and how the constant collision of these polar ideas have constructed today's world. To put it another way, 散场/*OVER* displays how the past world directed the unending drama of today's world through ideas, images, symbols, object relations and regulation of the human

body. Centering around 散场/*OVER* are a new series of sculptures named *Because They Can* (2020), two *Microworlds* of different dimensions, *Dark Matter* at the beginning, as if a selected series of specimens obtained via different means and through which we inspect the development of our world. The video work, *Fruits for Breakfast* (2017), depicts the changes that time and space impose upon physical matters. Painting also plays an important role in the exhibition's narrative: a five-meter-wide abstract painting illustrates the beauty of our time while revealing its source: produced and defined by current image production technology. Correspondingly, in another new series of paintings, Liu calls forth his own body as a subject of perception and action, recording the individual's contemplation of nature.

Around the year 2000, Liu Wei emerged from the then self-organized and largely "wild" art scene as one of China's first generation of "new wave" artists. As a member of the "Post-sense Sensibility" artists, Liu demonstrated an intense interest in exploring the relationship between the body and matter in his early works, which were characterized by his creative approach of intuitive judgement. For a long time, Liu was stimulated by the realities and changes brought about by China's urbanization and globalization. When processing materials, Liu gradually began to establish an installation language centering around the structural relationship between the physical and elemental properties of said materials. Moreover, in response to emerging methodologies of digital image production and their resulting aesthetics, Liu developed a unique theory of media landscape, embodied in a series of constantly evolving paintings recognized as "landscapes." During this time, Liu also began to explore the abstraction that arose between material and language, while maintaining his keen insight into the ever-changing world — its order, its rules, its manifestation, and its essence. This culminated in the *Microworld* installation beginning in 2018, as well as the new works in 散场/*OVER*.

Looking at Liu Wei's creative trajectory, the new works in 散场/*OVER* represent his new developments in the various media languages and methods. They also reflect the artist's consistent contemplation of the body, matter, ideology, and global order — they are his commentary and manifesto on the world after a long period of observation and practice. Ultimately, the exhibition points to a path of transcendence: transcending the material world, time, space, the body, senses, and self-consciousness. Indeed, these works, together with the entire exhibition, are bidding farewell to the defunct and collapsing world of the past. Yet the end heralds a new beginning. Thus:

散场,
OVER.

Farewell, era of matter and the body. The complex and broken civilization will send humankind as a whole into the ranks of the gods.

About the Artist

Liu Wei (b.1972, Beijing) was trained as a painter at the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, graduating in 1996. He is heavily influenced by the instability and fluctuation peculiar to twenty-first century China, in particular with respect to its physical and intellectual

landscape. Initially Liu belonged to the generation of artists known as the Post-Sensibility group; in the years since, with his paintings, videos and large-scale installations, Liu has become a singular presence on the global art stage. Post-Duchampian, and actively negotiating with the legacy of the Modern, his works crystallize the visual and intellectual chaos of China's fraught transformations into an artistic language as versatile as it is distinctive.

His recent solo exhibitions include "Liu Wei: 散场/Over," Long Museum West Bund, Shanghai, (2020); "Invisible Cities," moCa Cleveland and the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland (2019); "Shadows," Long March Space, Beijing (2018); "Panorama," PLATEAU, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul (2016); "Colors," Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2015); "Sensory Space 4," Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2014); "Liu Wei," Long March Space, Beijing (2012); "Trilogy," Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai (2011).

Recent group exhibitions include "Trilogy of Contemporary Art in China: The Scar," Busan Museum of Art, Busan (2020); "Entropy," Faurschou Foundation, Beijing (2018), Venice (2019); "Art and China after 1989: Theater of the World," Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2017), Guggenheim Bilbao, Bilbao (2018), and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco (2018); "L'emozione dei COLORI nell'arte," Castle of Rivoli, Turin (2017); "What About the Art? Contemporary Art from China," Qatar Museums Gallery ALRIWAQ, Doha (2016); "Bentu: Chinese Artists in a Time of Turbulence and Transformation," Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2016); "Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract Art and Society 1915–2015," Whitechapel Gallery, London (2015); "28 Chinese," Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2013), among others.

Liu Wei has participated in notable international biennials/triennials including the 51st and 58th Venice Biennale (2005, 2019); the 3rd Aichi Triennial (2016); the 9th and 13th Biennale de Lyon (2007, 2015); the 11th Sharjah Biennial (2013); Guangzhou Triennial (2002, 2005, 2008, and 2012); the 6th Busan Biennale (2008); Shanghai Biennale (2004, 2010, and 2016). He has received Artist of the Year from the Award of Art China (2016); the Martell Artist of the Year (2012); the Chinese Contemporary Art Award for Best Artist (2008); he was nominated for the Credit Suisse Today Art Award (2011).