

LI Liao | To Be A Better Man  
2019.11.2-2020.1.18

White Space Beijing is pleased to announce that on November 2, 2019, Li Liao will present To Be A Better Man. At 4:30 pm of the opening day, the artist will make a performance. This will be the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery and it will run until January 18, 2020.

It's often said that happy people are similar. If so, then would it be possible for all of us to achieve a similar happy life through understanding and abiding by a certain set of standards? In this exhibition, Li Liao continues his practice since Art is a Vacuum (1, 2), creating semi-fictional autobiographical works based on daily life, which present a series of real life situations mixed with artistic actions. Through his often allegorical and self-deprecating action strategy, Li Liao takes the initiative to set up or take advantage of a situation to reveal the structured (cold) violence, economic exploitation and ethical repression hidden at the micro level in the family and workspace of "socialized people". In this process he also observes and questions the evaluation mechanisms and rules for family production, social production and artistic production, and attempts to provide a set of playful strategies to deal with stress.

"The essence of humans is the sum of their social relations". With his "wife" as the hub of social relations, Li Liao developed a series of works with "father-in-law", "boss" and "I" as clues to trace a concrete and micro-level portrait of social relations. These four both shape the relationship and act as supervisors and critics of each other. Li Liao uses the "observer effect" in both directions, at times breaking cans and playing the troublemaker, and at others actively adapting and becoming a better person.

In the series Art is a Vacuum (1, 2, 3), Li Liao explores the cycle of patriarchal relations in the family space with the "father-in-law" as the focus (in this case, "father-in-law - Li Liao" and "Li Liao - daughter"), as well as the power struggles and subtle influence of the combination of seniority, money, and fame. The work also implicitly draws attention to the symptoms of aphasia often exhibited by contemporary art practitioners when facing the public. In the section about the "boss", Li Liao acts the role of "strategic counselor" to his wife. He resists the boss's training with a set of discipline evading strategies, both wary of and ridiculing the alienation and blurring of public-private boundaries in contemporary life caused by modern management techniques. At the same time, he unwittingly slides into a conspiracy to exploit the surplus value of his "wife". Differing from the modes of resistance in the above sections, in the "I" chapter, Li Liao consciously embraces "middle class life" standards. Parodying self-management techniques such as connecting one thing (emotion) to another (time), attaining in-depth knowledge (learning English) through attention to appearances (body-building), he repetitively tries to live out ideals of success from urban legends.

Perhaps this is the dilemma facing Li Liao in trying to be a better man: the more intense the resistance, the closer one's behavior is to that of an "accomplice". The more three-dimensional one's abdominal muscles are, the more "flat" the body is. But for the artist Li Liao, this practice of "ineffective" social production still needs to be "effectively" presented within the exhibition field, and achieving his desired middle-class economic stability depends on the final exchange of his artistic works in the gallery context.

Li Liao (b. 1982, Honghu, Hubei Province, China) received his BFA in Oil Painting at Hubei Institute of Fine Arts in 2005. Recent solo exhibitions include To Be A Better Man, WHITE SPACE BEIJING, Beijing, China, 2019; "Art is Vacuum", WHITE SPACE BEIJING, Beijing, China, 2016. Recent group exhibitions include Museum, Museum für Moderne Kunst (MMK), Frankfurt, Germany, 2019; The Street: Where The World Is Made, Mo.Co.Panacée, Montpellier, France; National Museum of the XXI Century Arts, Rome, Italy, 2018-2019; The D-Tale: Video Art from the Pearl River Delta, Times Art Center Berlin, Berlin, Germany, 2018; Performing Dramas, Centre National d'art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; Chi K11 Art Museum, Shanghai, China, 2017; Dragon Liver Phoenix Brain, OCAT Shanghai, Shanghai, China, 2016; What About the Art? Contemporary Art from China, Qatar Museums Gallery Al Riwaq, Doha, Qatar, 2016; Habits and Customs of \_\_\_\_ Are So Different from Ours That We Visit Them with The Same Sentiment That We Visit Exhibitions, Kadist Art Foundation Paris, Paris, France, 2016; The 3rd Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art, Ekaterinburg, Russia, 2015; Surround Audience, New Museum, New York, USA, 2015. Li Liao currently lives and works in Shenzhen, China.

李燎 | 做更好的人  
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空白空间高兴地宣布将于 2019 年 11 月 2 日呈现李燎于空白空间的第三次个展“做更好的人”。艺术家将在开幕当天下午 4 点半带来一场行为表演。展览持续至 2020 年 1 月 18 日。

如果说，幸福的人都是相似的，那么，是否洞悉和遵守了某套标准法门，就意味着我们可以兑现这相似的幸福人生？在本次展览中，李燎将延续自《艺术是真空》（1、2）以来基于日常生活的半虚构式自传体创作，展示一系列杂糅了真实境遇与艺术行为的混为一谈。通过时常颇具寓言意味和自嘲式的行动策略，李燎主动设局或因势利导，在“社会人”的真实角色扮演里，对潜藏在微观（家庭、工作）空间中结构化的（冷）暴力、经济剥削与伦理压抑，以及家庭生产、社会生产和艺术生产的评价机制及规则进行观察与质疑，并尝试提供一套应对压力的戏谑策略。

“人的本质是社会关系的总和”。李燎以“妻子”作为社会关系的枢纽，推进了一系列以“岳父”、“老板”、“我”为线索的创作，勾连出具体而微的社会关系画像。四人既是关系的形塑者，亦是彼此的监督人和批评家。李燎双向地运用“观察者效应”，或破罐子破摔、成为麻烦的制造者，或主动适应、做更好的人。

在《艺术是真空》（1、2、3）系列中，李燎以“岳父”为对象，探讨了家庭空间中父权关系的循环往复（在此例中的“岳父-李燎”、“李燎-女儿”），以及由辈分、钱财、名望等共构而成的权力角力与潜移默化，并隐含地讨论了当代艺术从业者面对社会大众时的失语症状。在以“老板”为线索的章节中，李燎充当妻子的“军师”，以一套反规训的策略抵制老板的调教，警惕和调侃了现代管理技术对人的异化以及当代生活中越发模糊的公私界限，却也在有意无意间滑向剥削“妻子”剩余价值的共谋边缘。与以上线索中采取的抵抗方式不同，李燎在“我”的章节中，识时务地主动顺应“中产生活”标准，通过戏仿一套由此（情绪）及彼（时间）、由表（练肌肉）及里（学英语）的全方位自我管理，周而复始、身体力行地实践如都市传说般的成功学。

或许，这正是做更好的李燎的两难境地：反抗越是激烈，行为却越似“从犯”，腹肌越是立体，身体却越发“扁平”。而对艺术家李燎来说，这一系列“无效”社会生产还需在展览场域中获得某种意义上的“有效”呈现，而向往着的中产经济基础则有赖于艺术作品在画廊情境中的最终兑换。

李燎，1982 年生于湖北洪湖。2005 年毕业于湖北美术学院油画系。近期的个展包括：做更好的人，空白空间，北京，中国，2019；“艺术是真空”，空白空间，北京，中国，2016。近期的群展包括：美术馆，现代艺术博物馆（MMK），法兰克福，德国，2019；The Street: Where The World Is Made, Mo.Co.Panacée, 蒙彼利埃，法国；罗马国立二十一世纪美术馆，罗马，意大利，2018-2019；影像三角志：珠江三角洲的录像艺术，时代艺术中心（柏林），柏林，德国，2018；展演剧场，蓬皮杜国家艺术文化中心，巴黎，法国；上海 K11 chi 美术馆，上海，中国，2017；龙肝凤脑，OCAT 上海馆，上海，中国，2016；艺术怎么样？来自中国的当代艺术，卡塔尔多哈阿尔里瓦克（Al Riwaq）展览馆，多哈，卡塔尔，2016；\_\_\_\_\_ 的风俗习惯与我们如此不同，观看他们所得到的感受如同在观看展览，卡蒂斯艺术基金会，巴黎，法国，2016；第三届乌拉尔当代艺术工业双年展，叶卡特琳堡，俄罗斯，2015；Surround Audience, 纽约新美术馆，纽约，美国，2015。李燎现生活和工作在深圳。