

LU PINGYUAN: THE FIRST ARTIST

Artist	Lu Pingyuan
Curatorial Input	Zian Chen
Opening	September 25, 2021 16:00 – 19:00
Exhibition Period	September 25 – October 27, 2021
Venue	MadeIn Gallery, No.1, -1F Sunken Garden, Lane 9 Qufu Road, Jing'an District, Shanghai

MadeIn Gallery is honored to present Lu Pingyuan's solo exhibition "The First Artist" on September 25th, 2021. This is the fourth solo exhibition of the artist at MadeIn Gallery. The exhibition will present for the first time the work of the artist in the past three years – a brand-new series center on Lu's memory of an artist character "Barbabeau" from the French cartoon "Barbapapa". The series involves various mediums including work on paper, mixed media painting and sculpture installation.

Throughout the years, Lu Pingyuan acquires peculiar treatment of tales as readymade. It begins in 2012 with a series of grotesque stories haunting the display in the exhibition space. In recent years, Lu's focus shifts to it-narrative and cartoon language, which evokes the issue of animacy. The concept of animacy generally refers to our imagination of the hierarchy of life as such—

Capital
 >Humans
 >Faunae
 >Floras
 >Bacteria

Lu Pingyuan notices that the image attractor of consumer goods is closely related to the concept of animacy, which determines how we discern other lives and souls. When a commodity is given limbs and eyes, and given a soul, its vigor begins to accelerate.

Non-beings → humans

Shifting animacy

In this exhibition, the Barbapapa family that the artist refers to is also enchanted with the magic of animacy. All of the family members are rootstock, but they reach out to viewers with anthropomorphic images. Their bodies can be transformed into vacuum cleaner, staircase, anything goes. Their housing is tailored and casted to their

actual forms, and all members born out of the fields respectively. These subversive life forms lead us away from the human-centered perspective.

What Lu Pingyuan first notices is the conflicts embodied in the artist Barbabeau. Barbabeau shoulders an important mission of transcending life and to unveil the world's nature. However, its art follows conventional methods such as painting on easel, throwing on pottery wheel and so on, and the results are not satisfactory. On The contrary, its body continuously undergoes deliberate or unintentional deformation during its artistic practice, which reflects the limitation of human experiences and seems to be much closer to the nature of artistic exploration. In this series of works, Lu Pingyuan pays attention to how the latter tallies with his understanding of the intangibility of art. He regards Barbabeau's body as the ready-made and medium in itself; he then depicts its creative process, contemplation and intense debates on the question of art making.

What happens if the artist who inspires you is a non-human? It affects the art historical reading and makes it truly rhizomic. In the case of Barbabeau, we can pay attention to "the social life of art." Such methodological phrase by Arjun Appadurai happens to be quite explanatory to Lu Pingyuan's ready-made magic, which Appadurai stylized as follows—

Today's gift is tomorrow's commodity.
Yesterday's commodity is tomorrow's found art object.
Today's art object is tomorrow's junk.
And yesterday's junk is tomorrow's heirloom.

Regarding this proverb, Appadurai intends to criticize modern culture for only acknowledging the initiatives of human beings, while neglecting the vitality of objects. Looking back, Lu Pingyuan's narratives about concepts of consumption and all sorts of grotesques are still evolving over the years. In here, there is still room for human/object to overturn the status quo, and there is still much left to be done.

About Lu Pingyuan

Lu Pingyuan was born in 1984 in Zhejiang province, China, lives and works in Shanghai. Lu Pingyuan's art-works involves a variety of media, including texts, installations, videos, paintings and others. For a few years, Lu Pingyuan concentrated his practice on the writing of "stories" as a unique type of media for art creation. These short "stories" significantly broaden the artworks' state of existence in the real world, extend the inherent spirit of art itself. His works have been exhibited extensively in both national and international museums and biennales.

Recent solo exhibitions include: "The First Artist", MadeIn Gallery, Shanghai, China, 2021; "Imperishable Affection", Powerlong Museum, Shanghai, China, 2020; "KOLA", chi K11 Art Museum, Shanghai, China, 2019; "La Malle aux Trésors", Mansion de Hermès, Shanghai, China, 2018; "Look! I'm Picasso!", with MadeIn Gallery, Art Basel Hong Kong, 2018; "Lost Child", ONEHOME Art Hotel, Shanghai, China; "HOME ALONE", MadeIn Gallery, Shanghai, 2017; "Hidden Treasure", The Galaxy Museum of Contemporary Art, Chongqing, China, 2017; "James Stanley-The Seventh Earl of Derby", Center for Chinese Contemporary Art, United Kingdom, 2016; "ON KAWARA", MadeIn Gallery, Shanghai, 2016; "Unexpected Discoveries", MadeIn Gallery, Shanghai, 2015; "Time Capsule", Gallery Box, Gothenburg, Sweden, 2011. He participated in numerous group shows among which are "Ever-Curious", Yuz Musuem, Shanghai, China, 2021; "Photosensitizer", Jinmao Place, Nanjing, China, 2020; "The Curation Workshop II", OCAT Shenzhen, Shenzhen, China, 2020; "Illusive Particles", MadeIn Gallery, Shanghai, China, 2020; "Shanghai Plaza", Shanghai Plaza, Shanghai, China, 2020; "Wild Cinema", TX Huaihai, Shanghai, 2020; "Being of Evils", Hive Center for Contemporary Art (Beijing), Beijing, China, 2020; "A Hypothetical Show For A Closed Museum", M Woods, Beijing, China, 2020; "Wild Metropolis", Powerlong Museum, Shanghai, China, 2019; "Advent: Inventing Landscape, Producing the Earth", Qianshao Contemporary Art Center, Shanghai, China, 2019; "Extreme Mix-Guangzhou Airport Biennale", Guangzhou, China, 2019; "Land of the Lustrous", UCCA Dune, Beidaihe, China, 2019; "Edge of the Wonderland-Thailand Art Biennale", Krabi, Thailand, 2018; "Artist is Present", Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China, 2018; "City Unbounded-China·Shanghai Jing'an International Sculpture Project", Jing'an Sculpture Park, Shanghai, China, 2018; "This is Shanghai", Cunard Building, Liverpool, UK, 2018; "Long March Project: Building Code Violations III - Special Economic Zone", Long March Space, Beijing, China, 2018; "Arts in Urban Cultures", Taikoo Li Sanlitun, Beijing, China, 2018; "underground-children-festival", Para Site x Goethe-Institut Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China, 2018; "Animamix Biennale—Ballade", Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai, Shanghai, China; "PLAY", MadeIn Gallery, Shanghai, China; "11th Shanghai Biennale", Power Station of Art, Shanghai, China, 2016; "9th Liverpool Biennale", Liverpool, England, 2016; "A Beautiful Disorder", Cass Sculpture Foundation, England, 2016; "Mountain Sites: Views of Laoshan", Si Fang Art Museum, Nanjing, China, 2016; "3rd Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art", Ural, Russia, 2015 etc. Lu Pingyuan was nominated for the 4th Art Sanya "Huayu Youth Award" and the 1st Porsche "Young Chinese Artist of the Year". Lu Pingyuan's work proposal, Tree, was shortlisted for the third and fourth High Line Plinth commission in 2020.

About Zian Chen

Zian Chen is a curator and co-editor of Heichi Magazine. His co-curated projects was realized at Pingpong Art Space, Taipei (2011-2012), MoCA Taipei (2011), ICC Sapporo (2013), Times Museum, Guangzhou (2018) and Long March Project, Beijing (2018-2019), among others. He has co-edited Arrow Factory: The Last Five Years (2020) and Olympic Reveries (2021). In the past two years, his has been writing on hauntologies in relation to the rapid changes in Chinese contemporary art under the serial title “Instant Retrospectives,” appeared at Heichi Magazine and LEAP. He is currently an online resident of Compost, the online platform of Institute of Contemporary Arts at NYU Shanghai (2021-22). The project is based on his recent experimental writings on racial politics titled Background Theory (Haikeiron), delivered at 2019 Asian Art Forum.