

*Ten Thousand Ugly Inkblots*

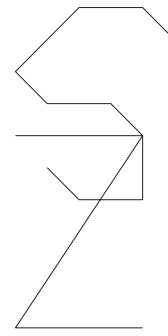
Part 2/3 with Nick Bastis, Anna Clegg, Gilles Jacot, Behrang Karimi, Kitty Kraus, Alan Michael, Ariane Mueller, Lukas Quietzsch  
January 8 – February 1, 2025



Shi Tao's *Ten Thousand Ugly Inkblots* (1685) marks a significant departure from the strictly composed, serene landscapes cultivated by the Qing dynasty painting tradition. Fluttering leaves disintegrate into impulsive, gestural splatters, to the extent that the rural landscape hinted at on the left side of the parchment almost entirely dissolves on the right. The title itself suggests an abandonment of illusion and instead refers to the medium in a way that could only be taken as an admission of failure if the pursuit of illusion were the painterly goal. Instead, Shi Tao's apperceptive humor engages with the materiality of image making beyond mimetic practice.

Parallel in Europe, Vermeer and Rembrandt obsessively studied light and shadow, equating man to god in the creation of worlds and masters of deception. In contrast, Shi Tao's work seems remarkably idiosyncratic, raising questions that are often prescribed as belonging to a discernibly modern disposition. Foreshadowing the expressive spontaneity of artists like Pollock, the disintegration of representation into abstraction in *Ten Thousand Ugly Inkblots* introduces concerns of flatness versus depth, artistic subjectivity, and viewer engagement issues that would come to dominate Western discourse in the 20th century.

I doubt that Shi Tao really thought of his inkblots as "ugly," but against the wistful, immaculate brushwork of the tradition in which he was educated, perhaps the chaotic splatters had a rather nauseating effect on contemporaries. Today, however, they seem quite beautiful – one might even be inclined to say *poetic* – as we have learned to appreciate the gestural expressivity of the so called avant-garde and developed a vocabulary for it. This goes to show how ideas of beauty and originality continuously change depending on context, and how, as the cyclical nature of rebellion and its subsumption churns, novelty and cliché are merely a matter of timing.



*Ten thousand ugly inkblots, Part 2/3*

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List of Works

Room 1

clockwise

Gilles Jacot, *Sorted*, 2023  
cardboard, mdf, insulation boards, industrial paint  
31 × 17 × 23 cm

Gilles Jacot, *Sorted*, 2023  
mdf board, tape, marker, screws, plastic, varnish  
32 × 17 × 16 cm

Gilles Jacot, *Sorted* 2024  
plastic, model boards, offset plates, screw  
40 × 4.5 × 4.5 cm

Alan Michael, *Untitled*, 2019  
silkscreen and acrylic on canvas  
86 × 68 cm

Gilles Jacot, *Sorted* 2023  
mdf board, industrial paint, varnish  
35 × 16 × 20 cm

Nick Bastis, *Real Traps*, 2021  
found consumer divider, aluminium tubes,  
aggregate filling  
40 × 3 × 3 cm

Nick Bastis, *Real Traps*, 2021  
found consumer divider, aluminium tubes,  
aggregate filling  
41 × 2 × 2 cm

Nick Bastis, *Real Traps*, 2021  
found consumer divider, aluminium tubes,  
aggregate filling  
31 × 4 × 4 cm

Kitty Kraus, *Untitled*, 2024  
polyester  
29 × 18 × 4cm

Room 2

Anna Clegg, *Burning Spear*, 2024  
oil on canvas  
60 × 45 × 4 cm

Anna Clegg, *Exterior 1*, 2024  
oil on canvas  
60 × 50 × 4 cm

Anna Clegg, *Untitled*, 2024  
oil on canvas  
30 × 35 × 4 cm

Lukas Quietzsch, *Die ersten 2000 Jahre  
Moralphilosophie* 2015  
gouache on canvas  
123 × 165 cm

Ariane Mueller, *to be shown with a painting*, 2023  
videoanimation  
3 minutes

Nick Bastis, *Real Traps*, 2021  
found consumer divider, aluminium tubes,  
aggregate filling  
38 × 4 × 2 cm

Entrance

Behrang Karimi, *Kompass*, 2019  
oil on canvas  
38 × 48 cm