

**TRST03: Covey Gong**  
March 23 – May 24, 2025

The Room of Spirit and Time was established by Empty Gallery in September 2024. Situated in an independent chamber to the left of the gallery's entrance foyer, TRST is an occasional platform for the extended contemplation of single works from a variety of periods and contexts. This new initiative functions as a space apart from the determinative logics and pressures of our formal exhibition program. Traversing both vast distances and infinitesimal niches, each presentation will be accompanied by a commissioned text approaching the work as a dynamic palimpsest in conversation with the unique social and historical circumstances of our city.

Playfully referencing Toriyama Akira's hyperbolic time chamber—a fictive dimension for self-cultivation in which the laws of space-time are transformed—TRST proposes a speculative epistemology grounded in non-Western philosophical resources as one potential method for productively wandering the treacherous crags and precipices of globalized culture.

The Room of Spirit and Time was a collaborative project which took place at the Queens Museum between 2018 and 2021. Its name and concept have been leased to Empty Gallery for an indefinite period of time in a convivial spirit.

For our third presentation, TRST will display a new installation by Covey Gong. Gong's work is often concerned with the circulation and staging of cultural signifiers within the context of material culture. Expanding upon recent projects exploring the mis-en-scene of Puccini's opera *Turandot*, at TRST he continues to critically investigate how monumental architecture and seemingly benign design motifs function within the affective dramaturgy of touristic consumption and cultural chauvinism.

*The World, 2025* comprises two distinct material phases in dialectic with one another. Cast bronze and triangulated steel elements communicate, respectively, the opposing virtues of heaviness and lightness, opacity and transparency, tradition and innovation. A miniature pyramid resembling a study model or touristic commodity perches above a modular architectural lattice; an enlarged reference to the so-called International Style which emerged in the early 20th century to later become the dominant language of infrastructural modernism. This base deliberately echoes the iconic design of I.M. Pei's tessellating entrance structure for the Louvre—as well as its myriad global reproductions—interrogating the manner in which “local” representations are absorbed into the fabric “the global” as ornamentation or kitsch as well as the ecologically impossible dream of a globalized Western modernity.

*The World* draws its title from Jia Zhangke's 2004 film of the same name. Depicting workers at the titular theme park in Beijing, Jia's film examines the deep ambivalence of a generation confronted by the ambiguous consequences of globalization and its creation of a world where the majority must be content themselves with simulacra whilst the socially (and terrestrially) mobile elite gradually exhaust the last vestiges of the real. Embodying these fraught and paradoxical dynamics, Gong's sculpture situates itself in the space between critique and nostalgia, asking the viewer to re-evaluate their own unquestioned entanglement with the forms and ideals of global modernity.

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**Covey Gong** (b. 1994, Hunan, China) lives and works in New York. He completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois. Gong's solo and two-person shows include: Bel Ami, Los Angeles (2024, with Monique Mouton); SculptureCenter, New York (2024); Derosia, New York (2023); Lubov, New York (2022, with Eli Ping); And Now, Dallas (2019); Bodega (Derosia), New York (2019); Salt Projects, Beijing (2018-19). Recent group exhibitions include: *The Hollow and the Receptive*, ADZ, Lisbon (2024); *Double Threshold*, Winter Street Gallery, Edgartown (2024); *To Breathe, To Walk, Murmurs*, Los Angeles (2024); *Leaking Heaven*, Laurel Gitlen, New York (2023); *Under the Volcano II*, Lomex, New York (2022); *When the World Becomes Flesh*, Baader Meinhof, Omaha (2022).