

MAO TONGQIANG

Trinidad

opening:

26.2.2019 at 7 pm

Calle Doctor Fourquet | Espacio Cruce

26.02 - 5.03.2019

28012 - Madrid

The work of Mao Tongqiang (b. 1960) is already in itself a work full of conceptual semantics. Tongqiang's work evolves through Duchampian *Readymade* and Chinese conceptual art, of which he is the greatest representative. According to Ai Weiwei, his works and objects have a symbolism that surpass the signified and build a piece of history. These objects are not urinals charged with an artistic significance; rather, they are abandoned pieces that remind us of what was present one day. Mao Tongqiang appeals to the theoretical meaning to these things, and creates an epic tone for his oeuvre, a tragic epopee of Chinese history.

"Trinidad", the artist's first solo exhibition in Spain (curated by Ada Naval), creates a path for the threads that divides the act of creation and the loss of identity. Such existence is understood as a symbol, as a novel *readymade* that directly speaks to humans, to the viewers. Starting from three key concepts in the artist's poetics, the pairs religion-spirit, body-territory, and human being-life, arise the issue of a collective identity that intimately strikes the individual.

In the work "Scriptures" (2018), the artist tackles the problem of Christianity arriving in China at the moment of the opening of capitalist markets. A new religion that was already not hiding its dogmas to adhere with Mao's communism, and that decided to leave behind the banner of social equality to dig deep into class differences. The different types of paper, spines, covers, and writings in the Bibles refer to such situation. While the awareness of belonging to a certain class was growing, the loss of identification with a certain religion was being lost and exchanged for an "easier" religion. So, what God

should we pray? What is the land that remains? If the land is the place we have, it must also be the place we inhabit. “Archives” (2018) exhibits original documents (verdicts and tickets) originating from the Ideological Remoulding period (1949-79). These documents embody the memory of the places that these people occupied, their own land, their faces (“Acuarelas”, 2018), their lives and deaths. After all, what remains? In what land does memory reside?

Such loss of the individual “having existed” is considered from a collective viewpoint; therefore, it is not only a man disappearing, it is all of them. This is the story behind “The Order” (2015); in this work, Tongqiang reconstructs a new Tiananmen Square, without the Unknown Rebel. This invites the viewer to reconsider not only the most obvious use – both public and private – of weapons, but also how shots and their bullets can pierce our image. The symbol born by the Bibles and the archives is now our own image, whose reflection constitutes our most relative identity. Such resonance – that is, the symbol that is manifest as our very own in “The Order” – springs from these bullets and reminds us that shots can only go through what exists in reality. The dead cannot be killed, they can only be forgotten.

Loss is the last element of our identity. If in loss a new identity is born, then a new identity is also a new act of finding ourselves. What is there, then, after loss?