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SFMOMA PRESENTS *HALF-LIFE OF A DREAM: CONTEMPORARY CHINESE ART FROM THE LOGAN COLLECTION*

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) is pleased to present *Half-Life of a Dream: Contemporary Chinese Art from the Logan Collection*, on view from July 10 through October 5, 2008. Organized by Jeff Kelley, guest curator for SFMOMA, this thematic selection of approximately 50 paintings, sculptures, and installations spanning 1987 to 2007 brings into focus an underlying subject common among Chinese artists of the post-Mao era: their exploration of personal dream-states in relation to the collective state dream.

While contemporary Chinese art is often discussed as a cynical reaction of artists to emerging consumerism or as a satiric response to the academic patriotism of official art, *Half-Life of a Dream* reveals the work to be more haunted than cynical, more a matter of a nation's suppressed psychic expression than of Pop iconoclasm or ironic detachment. Unlike the American dream, which is based on the individual as the driving force of national identity, the fate of the individual in China has traditionally been inseparable from the fate of the nation. *Half-Life of a Dream* asks the question: What happens to artists when their society suddenly wakes up from its leader's dream? The half-life of that dreamscape—the time it takes for Mao's influence over China to cool—is the period in which contemporary Chinese art has emerged as an international force.

Half-Life of a Dream conveys a sense of the shadows that have haunted the Chinese collective psyche during the nation's troubled process of modernization, and features a range of artists including Zhang Huan, Yu Hong, Sui Jianguo, Fang Lijun, Li Songsong, Lin Tianmiao, Ai Weiwei, Zhang Xiaogang, and Liu Xiaodong. Younger artists such as Li Songsong, Li Dafang, Yin Zhaoyang, and Zheng Li are also represented, as are the powerful historical and social commentaries by important female artists such as Yu Hong, Liu Hung, and Lin Tianmiao.

Among the works gathered here, themes emerge such as sleep and dreaming, ghosts and masks, disequilibrium and drowning, confrontations with power, the underside of progress, the ruins of body and history, and psychic vulnerability.

According to Kelley, "If China confronted the West geopolitically during the Cold War, Chinese artists have confronted the geocultural nexus of international modernism since 1989. Though China tried desperately under Mao to modernize, it never really achieved a cultural modernity, save Marxist ideology. Its aesthetic "great leap"



Fang Lijun, *980815*, 1998; Collection of Vicki and Kent Logan, fractional and promised gift to SFMOMA; photo: Ben Blackwell, courtesy

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was from Socialist Realism to a vague idea of global postmodernism, and thus a shift from illustrating the state dream to developing personal styles.” He continues, “This was a psychological revolution in which a collective hallucination gave way to the ghosts in each artist’s head. But with any powerful dream the emergence of contemporary art in China feels caught in a state between sleeping and waking, a state in which the remnants of a dream and reality commingle.”

Offering a spectrum of individual responses by Chinese artists to these lingering “dreams of China,” this presentation investigates the unresolved psychic aftermath that has driven Chinese society since 1949 and continues to characterize its public life. As such, the larger goal of *Half-Life of a Dream*, aside from articulating artistic developments since the Tiananmen Square protests, is to look to the future of Chinese art as it continues to struggle with transition. Recent monographic and survey exhibitions have documented the last two decades of Chinese art, including the now-familiar Political Pop and Cynical Realism movements. SFMOMA’s presentation suggests the deeper psychic undercurrent of dreaming that connects contemporary Chinese art both to its collectivist past and—as China undergoes more dramatic change in the next two decades—its globalist future.

At the conceptual and spatial heart of the exhibition, Sui Jianguo’s room-size installation, *The Sleep of Reason* (2005), depicts Mao, covered in a peasant blanket, sleeping above an undulating landscape of twenty



Sui Jianguo, *The Sleep of Reason* (detail), 2005; painted Collection of Vicki and Kent Logan; photo: Kaz Tsuruta, courtesy Asian Art Museum of San Francisco; © Sui Jianguo and Asian Art Museum of San Francisco

thousand plastic toy dinosaurs that from a distance resemble the continent of Asia. The first time a contemporary Chinese artist has portrayed Mao lying down, the work imagines the chairman’s dream of China as a turbulent state both destructive and creative.

Artist Ai Weiwei, widely regarded as the godfather of experimental Chinese art (and also famous for having collaborated with Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron to design—and then distance himself from—Beijing’s National Stadium, known as the “Bird’s Nest”) is represented here by his *Colored Vases*, 2007. By

dipping Neolithic clay jars in industrial enamel, the artist covers their ancient patterns with flows of pastel color, neutralizing the authority of tradition and redefining the objects’ contemporary aesthetic value for having been destroyed.

Other highlights include Zeng Fanzhi’s *Mask Series No. 10* (1998), a painting of same-sex intrigue in which two wide-eyed male protagonists wearing crisply tailored suits and white masks flirt awkwardly. The body language between them is something like a modern-day version of traditional Peking Opera in which female roles are played only by men.

Zhang Dali’s *100 Chinese* (2001) depicts the faces—cast in synthetic resin—of migrant workers who flock to Beijing from the countryside, an anonymous and growing urban population that doesn’t officially exist. Eyes and lips closed tight, the heads wear expressions of endurance and passive acceptance, suggesting the erasure of identity in the context of massive growth and displacement.

Yu Hong is known for her narratives of women that run parallel to the larger story of China since the Cultural Revolution. *She—White Collar Worker* (2006), a painting based on photographs taken by the artist of a mother and daughter in their everyday domestic environment, incorporates actual photographs taken by the same women of themselves, providing two very different versions of the subject.

The exhibition also features Yue Min Jun's sculpture *The Last 5000 Years* (2000), a larger-than-life-sized group of figures bearing the artist's signature expressions of laughter; Lui Xiaodong's *Xiaomei* (2007), named after the model he painted as she drifted in and out of consciousness; Bay Area artist Lui Hung's *We Have Been Naught, We Shall Be All* (2007), a triptych based on a well-known Chinese propaganda film of 1949; and several of Fang Lijun's shaved-headed, grimacing figures that have become icons of mid-1990s Cynical Realism.

Half-Life of a Dream succeeds SFMOMA's 1998 survey of contemporary Chinese art *Inside Out: Chinese Art*, co-organized by SFMOMA and the Asia Society Galleries, New York. Mounted nearly ten years ago—well before China's critical position in the global art arena would become so widely discussed—this groundbreaking overview was one of the first international exhibitions to explore the momentous impact of China's changing political, economic, and social realities on its contemporary art scene. *Half-Life of a Dream* continues SFMOMA's significant contribution to the dialogue and research surrounding China's burgeoning art scene.

To coincide with the exhibition, SFMOMA, in association with University of California Press, will publish a lavishly designed 144-page catalogue with approximately 100 color plates and original essays by exhibition curator Jeff Kelley, Christoph Heinrich, Eleanor Heartney, and collector Kent Logan. The hardcover catalogue, priced at \$35, will be available at the SFMOMA MuseumStore and bookstores worldwide.

In conjunction with *Half-Life of a Dream*, SFMOMA's Education Department will present related events and interpretive programs including lectures, symposia, film screenings, and docent tours.

ABOUT THE COLLECTION

Vicki and Kent Logan are among the nation's most active collectors of contemporary art. In 2002 they built a large gallery space in Vail, Colorado, to house their collection, which currently numbers more than 900 works—including what is believed to be the largest private holding of contemporary Chinese art in the United States. In 1997 the Logans donated 250 works of art from their collection to SFMOMA, a gift that has grown by more than 100 works since then. The Logans also have made generous gifts of the works in their collection to the Denver Art Museum.

Half-Life of a Dream: Contemporary Chinese Art from the Logan Collection is organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Support for the catalogue has been provided by Sotheby's.

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Museum hours: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:45 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day): Open at 10 a.m. Closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas. The museum is open the Wednesday between Christmas and New Year's Day.

Koret Visitor Education Center: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:30 p.m. Summer hours: Open at 10 a.m.

Admission prices: Adults \$12.50; seniors \$8; students \$7. SFMOMA members and children 12 and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings after 6 p.m. admission is half-price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by Muni, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, and Caltrain. Hourly, daily, and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415.348.0971.

Visit our web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is supported by a broad array of contributors who are committed to helping advance its mission as a dynamic center for modern and contemporary art. Major annual support is provided by Koret Foundation Funds, the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, and Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. KidstART free admission for children 12 and under is made possible by Charles Schwab & Co. Inc. Thursday evening half-price admission is sponsored by Banana Republic.

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