

# B A R B A R A   G R O S S   G A L E R I E

QIU ANXIONG

>The Temptation of the Land<

Exhibition September 15 – October 31, 2009

Qiu Anxiong is one of the most outstanding Chinese artists of his generation. The gallery is hosting Qiu Anxiong's first solo exhibition in Germany, featuring the animated film, *The Temptation of the Land*, made in 2009, along with the acrylic paintings that form the basis for this film.

Qiu Anxiong is known for his animated films, which are inspired by historic visual sources and make conscious references to classic Chinese ink painting. The transposition of traditional elements into a contemporary context is the most special feature of his works. Six years of study in Germany, at the Kunsthochschule Kassel, altered Qiu Anxiong's view of China and led him to begin an exploration of his Chinese identity. He began an intensive study of Chinese mythology and philosophy, and of the teachings of the Tao, Buddhism, and Confucianism. His animated film, *New Book of Mountains and Seas*, garnered awards from around the world and is an exemplary approach to classic Chinese materials and their usage in a contemporary setting.

Looking for sources for his new film, *The Temptation of the Land*, Qiu Anxiong turned to the *Companion*, an illustrated magazine similar to the American magazine *Life*; the *Companion* is published in Shanghai and has enjoyed wide circulation since 1926. The themes of its articles range from the politically and socially controversial to the popular. The artist has appropriated a selection of images that illustrates the rapid transformation of China, starting with the foundation of the Republic of China in 1911, after the end of the Qing Dynasty. In particular, Qiu Anxiong raises the level of awareness that a sense of history has been lost, and that Chinese society has become less conscious of its own cultural roots.

Each visual composition, executed in acrylic paint on canvas, also functions as a specific film shot. His subtle interventions involve a process of erasures and additions; the compositions are photographed in succession, put together into an animated film, and then digitally processed. In Qiu Anxiong's paintings the artist's subjective sense of each historical moment is visible. He develops visions full of poetic feeling in his figurative to freely abstract paintings. He detects traces of aesthetics and history, discovering in his animated films a distinctive form of artistic expression.

With penetrating insight, Qiu Anxiong succeeds in creating an awareness of the high price that China has paid in its push for modernization. His work opposes the process of forgetting old traditions, values, notions of morality, and the loss of a uniquely Chinese identity.

Qiu Anxiong, born in 1972 in Chengdu, Sichuan province, lives in Shanghai and teaches at the Shanghai Normal University. He became known with his *Staring into Amnesia*, presented by Art Unlimited at Art Basel 2008, as well as through his participation in the biennials at Sydney in 2008 and in Shanghai in 2006. His work can be seen in many exhibitions on contemporary Chinese art: for instance, at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2008; Museum d'art modern Grand-duc Jean, Luxembourg, 2008; China Power Station I, II, and III, Serpentine Gallery London et al, 2006-2008; Astrup Fearnley Museet for Moderne Kunst, Oslo, 2007. In 2007 the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, Japan, was the first to present an important solo exhibition of his works. During the run of our show, Qiu Anxiong's works will also be seen at the ARKEN Museum for Modern Art in Denmark. The artist is the recipient of the 2006 Chinese Contemporary Art Award.

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