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BINGYI

Seamlessly Lost

3 October 2009 – 15 November 2009

Opening Saturday 3 October 2009 5-8 pm

Erna Hecey is pleased to present **Seamlessly Lost**, the first solo exhibition of Bingyi in Europe. One of the most ambitious and provocative painters of her generation from China, Bingyi is known for her large-scale conceptual painting projects, which she terms “largescape”. **Seamlessly Lost** is a site-specific composition of an impressive scale. It is a one-piece 40 meters long and over 3 meters high linen canvas. The painting sprawls over the entire wall of the main space at Erna Hecey Gallery, echoing the ancient cave paintings from Lascaux.

With every character portrayed, the painting gently unveils one person’s universe that is melancholic and idiosyncratic. Over 300 historical figures, strange creatures, deities and animals are buried in the “largescape”, making references to classic texts such as *New Account of Tales of the World* (世说新语, 5th century AD), *Classics of Mountains and Oceans* (山海经, 2nd century BCE) and *Journey to the West* (西游记, 16th century). The painting opens by describing the birth of the world from fire, and unfolds into various natural and human catastrophic events, including earthquake and floods. It soon explodes into a “black hole” of negative space.

Unlike a classical Chinese Handscroll, which demands the viewer to roll the painting, this project animates the audience through three different approaches. One is to encourage them to walk the painting on a grandiose scale. The second is to ask the viewer to read the painting in an intimate fashion. And the third and perhaps the most challenging one is to ask the audience to compose their own paintings while making the decision as to how and when to “destroy” the entity by cutting it in pieces: The artist allows the audience to purchase the painting according to its own design based on a unit price for a piece of minimum 36 x 36 cm. The implication is that as the show nears its completion, the remains of the overall structure will be left with a number of “windows” of different sizes.

The conceptual complications that may happen during this process raise vital questions.

The first is evidently philosophical whereas the challenge being psychological: What does it mean to cut this piece apart? How do we feel when we are confronted by the violent contrast between the fragility of art and human life, and the harshness of a cultural system?

The second is critical: What is the relationship between a commercial act and a creative pattern? Is there always an ambivalent exchange between the two? Can both be of the same?

The third is historical: many foreign collectors took away murals from the Buddhist caves and temples in Northern China and left similar windows on the walls. So often we live with the history of incompleteness. Then the question becomes: Why is it difficult to accept the artist's own decision to have the painting "lost" to its audience? What is the meaning for the notion of "eternity" of art and art-making? If life is ephemeral what is the purpose of believing in the illusion of "authentic completeness"?

And finally, this project exposes a level of cynicism in the practice of contemporary art: When we are so invested in the "discourse" of art, what about the image itself? Does it still matter? What is the significance of its lifespan?

Other work presented in this show consists of a series of wood-block prints of 88 x 200 cm, forming *The Book of Sensation* with an ancient appearance. Each print juxtaposes an idiom made up by the artist and a pictorial image hand-made by Bingyi and the renowned print-maker Yang Hongwei. The content of the book explores the problems of sexuality, intimacy and tensions that permeate all human relationships. Bingyi argues that the notion of sensations can be both physical and ideological, as she perceives such notions as a direct expression of the various problems introduced by the debates of modernity.

Since Bingyi appeared in her first solo exhibition in 2007, she has exhibited worldwide at various museums, galleries and biennials. She has shown at Caixa Forum in Madrid (2008), Max Protetch Gallery in New York (2008), The White Rabbit Museum in Sydney (2009), the Chinese Architecture Biennial in Chongqing (2007) and the 7th Gwangju Biennial in Korea (2008). She is going to open a solo exhibition in Contrasts Gallery, Shanghai, on November 22nd, 2009.

Bingyi lives in Beijing and New York.