JIN SHAN

My dad is Li Gang!

DAVID WINTON BELL GALLERY, BROWN UNIVERSITY
MY DAD IS LI GANG! 我爸爸是李刚! 2012
Mixed media, dimensions variable
Photograph by Shane Photography
Introduction to the Art of Jin Shan

So many absurd, terrible, and amazing stories become the inspiration for my work. “So many absurd, terrible, and amazing stories” is a Chinese idiom describing a person’s creativity and imagination. It implies a person’s ability to see the beauty in the mundane and the potential in the improbable. Jin Shan’s work often draws from his personal history, as well as his modes of critiquing the socio-political landscape of contemporary China. Beyond his personal history, Jin Shan often draws from his sensibilities of his 2004 series featuring the figure of the “Chinese Man,” which could be interpreted as a critique of the Chinese culture’s stereotype of flagrant Chinese copying and pastiche. Jin Shan’s work often plays with the idea of authenticity and originality, challenging the viewer’s perception of cultural appropriation.

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A graduate of East China Normal University, Jin Shan was born in Jiangsu and lives and works in Shanghai, China. He is represented by Petin Fine Arts, Beijing, Aike Dell’Arco, Shanghai, and Masters & Pelavin, New York.

by Jin Shan in Shanghai, many who have been displaced by development and construction over the last decade. Sustaining the critique of power, desire, and ambition, the false walls allow the visitor to “see behind the scene,” revealing the power dynamics proposed by Jin Shan’s installation to be temporary and vulnerable. They are a construction, not an absolute, and are subject to criticism.

The texture of physical pressure from the hands of the workers on the walls creates a backdrop of angst and resistance for the playing out of a final dance between the space station and the three-wheeled cycle. The whole scene is lit in a soft yellow light, the space station’s mirrors casting hundreds of small reflections around the room. The scene could be called a big “yellow” political disco party, but as the disco-ball has crashed to the ground, Jin Shan may be declaring that, for him, the party is over.

Ian Alden Russell, Curator

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“My dad is Li Gang!” (我爸是李刚!) is a Chinese social meme that developed in late 2010 after a hit-and-run incident involving the son of a local police official in Baoding, Hebei province, China. The driver Li Qiming, who hit two students, killing one, fled the scene saying “Go ahead, sue me if you dare. My dad is Li Gang!” Social outrage erupted, provoking a social media phenomenon in Chinese internet culture known as the “human flesh search engine”—a massive, socially dispersed research phenomenon using blogs and forums to collaboratively identify and expose individuals to public humiliation. Shortly after the incident, the human flesh search engine revealed that Li Qiming’s father was the deputy director of the local police security bureau. The Communist Party responded with attempts to suppress and assuage the issue, releasing weeping apologies by Li Gang and then his son Li Qiming. Prominent newspapers responded with calls for authorities to investigate the issue until the Central Propaganda Department issued a directive for the news media to recall all reporters from Baoding. The legal representation of the victims’ families subsequently withdrew from the case, and internet discussion of the case ceased abruptly. Local students and activists continued to speak out, but it was not until January 2011 that Li Qiming was arrested, sentenced, and ordered to pay damages to the families of the victims.