



Gao Weigang 高伟刚

An intensely versatile artist whose works employ a wide range of media, including painting, sculpture, installation and performance, Gao Weigang evades categorisation of his artworks into a particular genre. His language makes each piece both the apparatus and the product of experiment, transforming objects so they break through the audience's natural and ideological perceptions of the material world. Gao Weigang's creations are also personal: they are milestones in the artist's quest of self-reflection and a constant re-examination of himself. Despite the many artistic forms and materials Gao Weigang adopts and the great aesthetic variations throughout his works, they all reflect his intention to challenge the viewer's accustomed visual culture with a sense of humour and an overriding hint of scepticism. Whether it is painting, sculpture or installation, the artist manages to retain a strong sense of medium-specificity.

Gao Weigang challenges representations, experimenting with the figurative while voiding iconicity. Inspired by the Unicorn, a classic image of Western mythology "Discovery" is made with stainless steel coated with titanium gold. The artist dwells on the concept of myth here and on its true nature: even in the guise of wonder, it is a lie. The artist thus questions the power of images and messages and the faith put in such tales, derived from their religious nature (in the original sense of the word i.e. to link people) and repetition. Such examination of visual culture sometimes dwells on Chinese classical iconography. The *Remaining Issue* (2011) depicts a pillar with two somewhat unrelated objects on it. The lion who usually plays with this ball has left his post and left behind fecal matter. Both the ball and feces are trivial, yet with irony and a tint of humour, the artist sculpted them with marble along with the marble pillar. In this work, Gao Weigang's conceptual stance plays around an antique Chinese imagery of the stone lions guarding the gates of important establishments, but reduced to the random combination of evidences of their absence, one expected and related to tradition (the ball) and the other utterly displaced both in the classical iconography and in an artwork. In other instances, the artists purposely create a visual conflict between Western and Eastern cultural connotations. In "Intuition", the piece featured in the Hong Kong art fair in 2011 and now in the Burger collection, the traditionally almighty tiger still rendered in a fashion alike ink painting and on a silk scroll is depicted as a skin made in a carpet. Visually the Chinese tradition and the object more familiar to the taste of colonisation collide. Both symbols of power, authority and protection are rendered in such a humourous way, their cultural significance is questioned. Gao Weigang's works prompt questions to the audiences to rethink about how accurate their common knowledge and perception is.

Born in Heilongjiang Province, China, in 1976, Gao Weigang graduated from the Tianjing Academy of Fine Arts in 2006. He currently lives and works in Beijing. Widely exhibiting across the Mainland China as well as in Hong Kong and London, the artist was awarded winner of "Art Futures" in *Art HK 2011* in recognition of his artistry and the originality of his work.