

Hu Qingyan

2023

Exhibition in Beijing: 10.12.2022–26.2.2023

Opening: Saturday, December 10, 4–6.30pm

Galerie Urs Meile Beijing is honored to announce the latest solo exhibition of Hu Qingyan (b. 1982, Shandong Province), titled *2023*. This exhibition is a concentrated presentation of the artist's latest creations, representing the artist's sustained and increasingly deep explorations of form, medium, reproduction, and transformation. While continuing the themes of "emptiness" and "substance," the artist presents the reality he perceives around him in a highly interventive and personal manner.

With the fluctuations of the economy and the pandemic, the dramatic has become the everyday reality. Hu Qingyan has chosen marble, a cold, neutral and solemn material, as the sole material for all of the artworks in this exhibition. Beyond their discussion of questions internal to sculpture, these creations lead us into multidimensional explorations of society, philosophy, and politics through which to ponder the complex substantive and illusory relationships between art, reality, and life.

The heavy yet hollow stone cube *Home* (2019–2022, blue stone, 110 × 130 × 110 cm) lays across the entrance, unavoidable. Next, a large expanse of blue—the color of the barrier fencing that has become such a common sight during a unique period in Chinese history—stretches across the ground in the center of the exhibition space, obstructing the corridors the artist has laid out to form a visual and physical sense of blockage, the feeling of being forced down a set path.

The corridor eventually leads viewers to scattered sculpted objects, the empty storage crates with rotting fruits and vegetables on the floor recreating a dejecting everyday scene. Cardboard boxes carved from marble are stacked like gifts, or flattened like waste, laid on pallets, or tossed directly on the floor, creating an unsettling memorial of empty and superfluous consumerism.

In over a decade of artistic creations, Hu Qingyan has gradually shifted from a "semblance" drawn from life to a true "semblance"—this semblance being the internalization of the external appearance, the "semblance" within the mind of the creator, the truth of individualized cognition. Like a craftsman, the artist tirelessly imitates and effortlessly transforms the world, nimbly recreating ordinary things so that they may be examined and observed anew. In the decade-long *One Breath* series, Hu Qingyan instructs people to fill a plastic bag with a single breath. The plastic bag's volume becomes a transformative presentation of the body's inner space. In this way, he translates the invisible, abstract inner volumes of the body into tangible solid masses, sculpting lovers, relatives, friends, and himself. Compared to the intimate and individualized emotional language of *One Breath*, the vegetable and fruit crates, and cardboard boxes are public observations and philosophical reflections carried out through the language of sculpture.

The striking red that fills the marble painting frame on the wall is familiar and tantalizing. The frame is engraved with the words "Where is the art", in a direct phrasing of the artist's continued probing of the ontology of art.

As the viewer makes detours around the obstructions in the artificial corridor, the sounds of marble being carved and struck ring out in the exhibition space. The artwork *The Story of Art* (2008–2022, single-channel video, color, sound, 8'59") is like an aside in this exhibition, documenting the artist carving and sculpting a single piece of marble over a period of three years (2008–2010). Over this long period, the artist started with a single piece of marble, and carved it into a succession of objects including a box, bone, soap, dice, and finally, a single soybean, which was in turn ground down to powder. In 2022, the artist reconsidered and re-edited the footage from a decade before, using this fifteen-year absurd action that began with imitation to further his investigation of art.

A Piece of Superfluous Stone (2021–2022, ready-made stone, picture dimensions variable, stone: 44 × 97 × 45 cm), an installation work that Hu Qingyan has cloned from a stone in public space in the 798 Art District, precisely reproduces its proportions in original size and identical material, executing a lighthearted joke through the most rigorous methods, and sneakily replacing the original stone with this sculpted "counterfeit", turning it into a superfluous object. This artwork also pushes the artist's reproduction theme into entirely new territory.

As a conceptual sculptor, Hu Qingyan has chosen stone, a classic art historical material, for his interventions in reality. Behind this visual humor lurks a silent shout, a solemn, tranquil beckoning for us to engage in deep examination and expression of our unique era and the state of society around us.

2023 is approaching, and may even arrive before you enter the exhibition space. Or perhaps the artist's 2023 will always be at some point ahead, simply a fixed point or perspective the artist has posited for us to look back on the present.

Hu Qingyan was born in 1982 in Weifang, Shandong Province, China and studied sculpture at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts in Guangzhou and the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. He lives and works in Beijing. His recent solo exhibitions include: *2023*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing, China (2022); *Necessary Redundancy: Hu Qingyan solo exhibition*, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China (2020); *Absent & Superfluous*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing, China (2018); *Hollow Husk*, Galerie Urs Meile, Lucerne, Switzerland (2016); *Eternal Glory*, Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing, China (2015). A selection of his most recent group shows include: *M+ Sigg Collection: From Revolution to Globalisation*, M+ Museum, Hong Kong, China (2021); *The Memory Palace*, OCT Art & Design Gallery, Shenzhen, China (2021); *Golden Flow*, Beijing Contemporary Art Expo 2020, CHAO Art Center, Beijing, China (2020); *Jing'an International Sculpture Project*, Jing'an sculpture Park, Shanghai, China (2020); *Roots of Clouds Adrift*, OCAT Nanjing Public Art Project 2019, OCAT Nanjing Qixia Exhibition Site, Nanjing, China (2019); *Progress Every Day, Annual Nomination Exhibition 2019*, ZhuZhong Art Museum, Beijing, China (2019); *Encounter Asia – Multi-vision of Youth*, Museum of Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, Tank Loft, Chongqing Contemporary Art Center, Chongqing, China (2018); *Forty Years of Sculpture · Part 1 (2008-2017)*, Museum of Contemporary Art & Planning Exhibition, Shenzhen, China (2017); *The 3rd Today's Documents – BRIC-á-brac: The Jumble of Growth*, Today Art Museum, Beijing, China (2016); *Shut up and paint*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia (2016); *The Exhibition of Annual of Contemporary Art of China*, Beijing Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing, China (2016); *M + Sigg Collection: Four Decades of Chinese Contemporary Art*, ArtisTree, Hong Kong, China (2016); *Familiar Otherness: Art Across Northeast Asia*, Hong Kong Arts Center, Hong Kong, China (2015); *28 Chinese*, Rubell Family Collection/ Contemporary Arts Foundation, Miami, USA (2013); *Building Bridges – Zeitgenössische Kunst aus China*, Wolfsberg, Ermatingen, Switzerland (2013). His works can be found in the collection of many museums and institutions including National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, M+ Sigg Collection, Guangdong Museum of Art, Rubell Family Collection, Today Art Museum, K11 Art Foundation, Song Art Museum and White Rabbit Gallery.