

Beauty Without Beards

2017.01.19 – 2017.03.02

'The chief forms of beauty are order, symmetry and clear delineation'

– Aristotle

'In portraying ideal types of beauty... you bring together from many models the most beautiful features of each'

– Socrates

KWM Art Center is pleased to announce it's first show of 2017: *Beauty Without Beards*. A defining feature of KWM is our support of contemporary creation inspired by or connected with different histories, cultures and traditions. *Beauty Without Beards* is our first exhibition curated from an art historical point of view highlighting how ancient Greek notions of beauty have crossed cultures and media and still influence how we read the world. The title '*Beauty Without Beards*' translated into Chinese is Wu Xu Zhi Mei. "Wu Xu" has two meanings. First of all, it literally means "without beards". The Ancient Greeks were great admirers of the beauty of the human body and for them, the most beautiful living form of existence was the young man before he began puberty or was able to grow facial hair. The 5th century BC Greek sculptor Polykeitos' 'Doryphorus' (the Spear-Carrier) is not only an epic sculpture of a beautiful youth in the ancient Greek tradition, but also exemplifies his aesthetic theories of the mathematical bases of artistic perfection, perfect proportions and muscular tone. The second meaning is "unnecessary". Greek body aesthetics is not necessarily experienced or natural in our contemporary context. The 'unnecessary' or 'unnatural' feeling caused by this body idealisation positions us on the other side of the abyss and exposes us to an incredible hidden landscape, one that can stand short of present day politically correct standards.

The gallery space comprises of 48 works; 15 large paintings by Chinese French artist Li Xinjian and 33 photographs by Chinese photographer Ren Hang.

Between the years of 2005 to 2011, Li Xinjian painted his son growing up in various locations including New York, Paris, the south of France and Beijing. When he painted, his gestures on the canvas were natural and relaxed, because the subject was also a reflection or fantasy of himself. The boy always stays half naked. If he isn't painted surrounded by the dangers of nature, he is placed in a surreal futurist city. If he is not playing with sharks in a deep sea, he is jumping on top of a city roof to watch 9/11. His body is strong and fragile, light and tough. He looks like the delightful and fast Greek messenger Hermes, moving between the grand backdrops of nature and the future, always innocently jostling with the uncertainties hidden inside them.

Ren Hang's youthful subjects attract in two particular ways: through the beauty of exuberance and through the beauty of abstraction. The bodies in his works are naked, alive, tactile and desirable, at same time; they are also compositions, gestures, arrangements and forms. The American abstract expressionist William de Kooning (1904-1997) won his fame from his series "woman" by dissolving the female body into an abstract combination of paint. He once said: "they say that I am painting females, no, I am painting a landscape just like de Kooning, Ren Hang also finds abstraction in the human body absorbing. A body is also a landscape and an abstract structure. The young males in his works are wild animals or plants when positioned a deserted natural scene, but they change into brush marks or artisanal materials when they are twisted in front of a white wall in an internal setting. When you examine the photos

As portraiture, you still receive the psychological information and the poignance of desire but enter a bubble of fantasy. The attraction of the young masculine bodies lies in their ability to appear both inhumane and humane simultaneously. The subjects do not reveal a deep complicity with the mundane. They are at their peak of physical energy and youthful fantasizing.

About the Artists

Li Xinjian was born in 1964 and has lived and worked in Sichuan, Tibet, Beijing, New York and Paris. Upon graduating from the Sichuan Fine Art Academy in 1982, he volunteered to work in Tibet until 1991 working as a designer in the Exhibition Hall of the Tibetan Autonomous Region in Lhasa. In 1994, he graduated from ENSBA, State Fine Art Academy of Paris.

Ren Hang was born in Changchun, Jilin Province, China, in 1987. He is presently based in Beijing. He has held 22 solo exhibitions and been included in 85 group exhibitions worldwide. In addition, 16 photo books and a poetry collection have been published. His works are collected internationally in over 20 countries such as: France, Italy, Germany, UK, Sweden, USA, Japan, Austria, Mexico, Greece, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Russia, Israel and Lithuania.

金社艺术中心 (KWM Art Center)

The KWM Art Center opened on 20th October 2016. It is located on the second floor of the WFC center CBD in Beijing. The new art center is supported by the law firm King & Wood Mallesons and an KWM Art Center affiliated private art fund. The KWM Art Center has over 700 sqm of exhibition space, including an exhibition space, a VIP room and an educational space. It will be used to present and promote artists both domestically and overseas. In particular, it will act as a rare art institution at the heart of the economic central area in Beijing. It will provide high-quality art educational activities and courses aimed to cultivate art lovers and collectors. It serves to improve the international influence of Chinese Art and become a powerful communicator of Chinese Contemporary Art.