

Regarding Jianjun An's Appearances Series

The first meeting with Jianjun An was through an introduction by Zhirong Huang. My initial impression of Jianjun An was that he was a humble and reserved man who carefully observes his surroundings. While he showed a decisive personality, he was also very kind and amiable. After understanding the meanings behind his artworks, I found his works to be both diverse and full of vitality and unyielding tension. They reveal his art concept of realism and elements of expressionism. Art originates from life, just as how An's inspiration for his creative works comes from his experiences in life.

Over the years, he has thoroughly experienced the transitions and hardships of being an immigrant. From an educational background based on traditional Oriental culture to the liberal society of the west with extremely diverse thinking patterns, An has gone through a difficult and painful process. He had to use his own perspective to observe and think about the fundamental nature of everything around him, discovering many new things in the process and going beyond himself. An has nearly thirty years of abundant experience in creative art. His early creative works were reflective of his emotions and mentality to express his mindset. They were full of energy, vitality, and enthusiasm, possessing a strong visual appeal. He especially focuses on life, society and reality and pays special attention to modern day society along with culture and real-life situations. This enthusiasm is fully expressed through his paintings with many important messages and positive encouragement.

Jianjun An's new series Appearances contains many meaningful works and marks a new milestone in his journey on the path of art. Each is a life-sized painting that presents a diverse spread of personalities and representations. In the era of Internet and modern technology, these images come from the common scenes in daily life. The characters live in the now but look towards the future and utilise their own personal experiences and the language of art to freely express themselves. Through appreciating these artworks, the audience is able to understand and experience a different identity, place, time, language, cultural background, and the inner journey of the artist. These figures come from the impressions left on An from real-life people in his daily life but simultaneously represent, on a larger scale, the different cultural backgrounds, experiences and reciprocated feelings. The various identities in the real world and distinctive elements of certain emotions are merged together to provide the audience with a question: How do we present ourselves and how are we seen by others? The series Appearances represents how we present ourselves to the world around us and how this appearance is something that is built from within. Yet, at the same time, we are influenced by the diverse interpretations of all types of people and the stereotypes that exist in modern society. This type of image is a silent hope to show the rest of the world through the movement of the people that each person has their own

story to tell. They wish to convey that their discussion with culture can help to reveal the topic of the self.

Through this series of artworks, Jianjun An raises a number of questions that are worth considering: Do any of these depictions of immigrants represent the “types” of immigrants around us to a certain degree? What is the sort of mentality they have, and how does real-life experience compare with personal feelings and thoughts? Does their outer appearance reflect or reveal what they really think inside? Does the difference between what is shown and what is actually within have a significant importance to the people of today? Artist Jianjun An’s own experience in creative art is a classic representation of the modern era. The exhibition of his series, Appearances, reminds the audience to carefully pay attention to the social and cultural concerns and to bring about a series of strong, meaningful questions.

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