

BRAND NEW GALLERY

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presents

EAST EX EAST

curated by Jane Neal

9 June – 30 July 2011

Opening: 9 June, 7 – 9 pm

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes”

Marcel Proust

Brand New Gallery is delighted to present *East Ex East*. Curated by Jane Neal, the show brings together a substantive number of works by some of the most exciting and challenging artists working today: **Ahmed Alsoudani, Rina Banerjee, Ali Banisadr, Zsolt Bodoni, Erik Bulatov, Victor Ciato, Keren Cytter, Slawomir Elsner, Ori Gersht, Yun-Fei Ji, Terence Koh, Tomasz Kowalski, Marcin Maciejowski, Tala Madani, Istvan Nadler, Anna Parkina, Daniel Pitin, Serban Savu, Raqib Shaw, Jasmin Sian, Shahzia Sikander, Do-Ho Suh, Alexander Tinei, Kon Trubkovich, Tam Van Tran.**

All the artists in the show originate from the East, Middle East or Eastern Europe. Many chose to live in western countries, as until relatively recently the East was perceived as 'hidden' from world view because politically and ideologically, it was diametrically opposed to the West. These artists believed it was important to relocate in order for their careers to develop, as this was felt to be the means to achieving international recognition. Now though, as the title of the exhibition suggests, the notion of East is perhaps more of a memory than a reality. The ending of communism across Central and Eastern Europe, the growth of a new middle class across China, the rapid development of Asia, globalisation and mass air travel have all helped bring a new world into being. Artists who grew up in Eastern Europe and who may have yearned for change, witnessed the re-forming of their societies, the onslaught of capitalist consumerism and how this affected their communities.

East Ex East strives to present sensitive, personal narratives alongside the shared experience of witnessing the evolving political and social identities of vast areas of the world. The significance of memory, freedom, the absence of freedom and the essence of what it is to feel caught in the 'between' are recurring motifs of the show but so too are investigations into the impact of ideologies and how the human imagination seeks and achieves ways of triumphing over systems of control, suppression and enforcement; capturing beauty even while enduring brutal regimes or confronted by the banality of 'ordinary' everyday life.

Locating the self in a country that is changing rapidly, or re-finding the self in another culture and country are sizeable challenges. An artist's identity need not be fixed within a particular culture; indeed historically artists have often chosen to dismantle received notions about private and public identities in their quest to be free to make art. Yet though the works of the artists in this show are very different, they share in common a period of transition that has clearly left a deep impact on them. This might be the transition of their national identity, but it could also be the transition of the self through migration from East to West and the commonality of the difficulties of navigating life in the contemporary world.

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Now again the spirit of change is in the air. The world is witnessing the power of upward influence across the Arab States. The potential of civil resistance to dramatically change an organisation or even a nation is a phenomenon all the artists in this show are acutely aware of. Even if they were still children at the time of the fall of the Berlin wall and during the events that followed, they know the implications of enormous political change for society and themselves as individuals. Indeed, the parallels between what happened in 1989 and the early 90's and what is occurring now in the Middle East are already starting to be drawn.

We are at the dawn of a new era of diversification, change and of multiple nations emerging, or re-emerging as forces to be reckoned with. It has been suggested that in many ways, the world is closer to resembling the power bases of the 19th Century, than reflecting the status quo of the 20th Century. 'East' as a place that is physically or mentally far away and therefore difficult for the Western mind to access, is now not only a reachable entity but arguably, already here. *East Ex East* aims to reflect the spirit of this new era and to powerfully but carefully engage the thoughts and practices of some of the world's most intriguing and talented artists.

East Ex East

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