

**Gonkar Gyatso** Born in Lhasa, Tibet; currently a British citizen and lives and works in New York. **selected solo exhibitions** 2010 *Gonkar Gyatso*, Rossi & Rossi, London. 2008 *Art Dubai*, Dubai. 2004 *Tibetan Word C art of communication*, The Sweet Tea House, London. 2003 *Leverhulme fellowships and Artist residence show*, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. 1999 *Contemporary Tibetan art C Gonkar Gyatso*, The Sontsen House Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland. 1997 *Gonkar Gyatso - Contemporary Tibetan Buddhist art*, International Cultural Centre, Helsinki, Finland. 1987 *ModernTibet Art of Gyatso, The Revolution Exhibition Hall of Tibet*, Lhasa, Tibet. **selected group exhibitions** 2010 *Melbourne Art Fair*, represented by China Art Project, Melbourne, Australia. *Kuandu Biennale 2010: Memories and Beyond – 10 Solo Exhibitions by 11 Asian Artists*, Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei, Taiwan. *Tradition Transformed: Tibetan Artists Respond*, Rubin Museum of Art, New York, USA. *Space Station*, Beijing, China. *The Beauty of Distance, Songs of Survival in a Precarious Age*, 17<sup>th</sup> Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, Australia. *A Man is not a Tree*, Galerie Sherin Najjar, Berlin, Germany. *The 6<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia. 2009 *Trading Meaning*, (China Art Projects) DAC Space, Beijing. *Two Voices*, Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane, Australia. *Tempting God*, China Art Projects at the Depot Gallery, Waterloo, Sydney, Australia. *Making Worlds*, The 53<sup>rd</sup> Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy. *Unbound: New Art for a New Century*, Newark Museum, USA. *Tibet Art Now: on the threshold of a new future*, Tibet Art Gallery, Temple, Amsterdam. *Tibetan Visions: Contemporary Painting from Tibet*, ASIA ONLUS, Rome, Italy. 2008 *A Question of Evidence*, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, Austria. *Return to Lhasa – The Second Tibetan Contemporary Exhibition* 798 Red Gate Gallery, Beijing. 2007 *Consciousness and Form -Contemporary Tibetan art*, Rossi & Rossi, London. *Thermocline of New Art Asian Waves*, ZKM/Museum of Contemporary Art, Karlsruhe, Germany. *Lhasa – New Art from Tibet*, 798 Red Gate Gallery, Beijing, China. **collections** (Australia) Queensland Art Gallery, Gallery of Modern Art, White Rabbit Gallery. (USA) Crocker Art Museum, California, The Newark Museum, New York. (UK) Rossi & Rossi, London, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, Immigration and Diversity Museum, London, The Sweet Tea House-Contemporary Tibetan Art Gallery, London. The Burger Collection, Switzerland. Red Gate Gallery, Beijing, China. Wereld Museum, Rotterdam, Nederland. **education** 1999-2000 MA (distinction) Fine Art. Chelsea College of Art & Design, London. 1980-84 BA Hons, Traditional Chinese Painting. The Department of Fine Art, Central Institute of Nationalities, Beijing, China.

### Dependent arisal in the work of Gonkar Gyatso

After viewing the work of pre-eminent Tibetan artist Gonkar Gyatso at the Queensland Art Gallery's 6th Asia Pacific Triennial, it is clear, at least in this writer's mind, why his work has impressed the international art world so strongly. That his approach is to unite global pop cultural imagery with the iconography of Tibetan tangka painting might go some way to explaining their broad appeal. On the other hand their sparse compositions are elegantly composed figurative creations, which readily command attention. That their subject matter concerns the social, political and cultural crises brought about by the Chinese annexation of the artist's homeland, undeniably adds to their desirability within a market hungry for cutting-edge cultural critique. Indeed, much has been written about the political dimensions of Gyatso's work – it's visualisation of commodity culture swamping Tibet's ancient ways, it's tabling of China's population displacement achieved with ever increasing velocity via its high-speed train to Lhasa; the loss of identity in a sea of other possible codes. But where much has been made of Gyatso's socio-political commentary little attention has been directed to the theoretical basis of his practice.

As one schooled in Buddhist philosophy it is natural that his take on the world might stem from so precise a perspective. I think this a point of note, for seldom if ever these days does religious or theological commentary find validation in the global art world, especially where sociological discourse tends to dominate. However, in Gyatso's work, the sting in the tale is not so much political (though this unquestionably is its overt lead) as philosophical. As a visualisation of the Buddhist concept of 'emptiness' for instance, his works are alive with complexity. So the theory goes, no single facet of existence, whether a material object, feeling or thought, arises independently, can be seen as separate to other things, or devoid of its causes and conditions. Tibet for instance cannot be seen as separate from China, or indeed from any other place. The actions of the Chinese cannot be seen without knowledge of their preceding circumstances, or indeed their future implications. And where consumer culture floods inwards, so too does the dharma, the teachings of the Buddha, course through the global synapses.

To illustrate this concept Gyatso has taken to working with stickers. These ephemeral candy coloured 'peel-offs' depict everything from Homer Simpson to Betty Boo, from Shrek to Tiger Woods and beyond. There are Chinese, Japanese, American and English stickers. There are logos and pop stars, lamas and layabouts, all eagerly vying for attention. These the artist clusters in a pointillist kind of way, and from which particular forms emerge. At first glance it is easy to read this as sardonic Buddhist humour – impermanence in the guise of disposable market place fetishism. But the story does not end there. Clumped together, they form something utterly antithetical to their aims – sublime images of the Buddha, seated in meditation, smiling beneficently, reclining on the cusp of parinirvana. At this point it is right to feel that not all is what it seems. Were certain elements to fall, then the Buddha would cease to be.

Inevitably the great sage is bound like all by causality, is linked ineluctably to the infinitude of things. Is the artist offering a presentiment of the future; a vision of interchangeability? And so the questions continue.

While it is perhaps difficult to reconcile the traditions of western materialism with Buddhism's delimiting of our world's apparent solidity, Gestalt theorists may warm to Gyatso's field of vision, in which clusters of chaotic dizziness give way to order and harmony. Quantum physicists might also applaud, siting this interplay of possibilities, from micro to marco, one to another as a constant shifting of atoms across time, space and memory. But even here, we pause to ask, is the image before me a Buddha or simply my mental projection of one? René Magritte would like this - neither pipe nor Buddha, it is consciousness in the act of making, and in this we are invited to play.

I think about all of these issues at the same time as feeling the urgency of Gyatso's work; a practice which is pretty much to the point, whether the issue to hand is Tibet or Abu Ghraib, the decimation of language or the rise of racial profiling. All of these things are at work in his practice, though at first glance they dance with colour and life. As a new breed of Tibetan artist his work is certainly unflinching. However as much as it highlights what so many know to be true it refuses to ignore the complexities of the times in which we live, just as it refuses to abandon the age-old logic of Buddhism's central tenet, that all of existence is bounded by a web of interconnectedness.

Like much Buddhist art Gyatso's work is a statement too of serenity. But it is a serenity in which the intensity of life is free, even encouraged, to cavort as it pleases. The ability of his work to do so seems somehow the product of a natural detachment, in which the world is observed but in no way permitted to engulf. I would not have suspected so schematically governed an artist to be a connoisseur of the world at large, but then again his dissatisfaction with an erstwhile codified practice, as Tanka painting assuredly must be, would not have arisen were it not for his need to reconcile the old and wondrous traditions with all that is new and perplexing. Indeed more than a few commentators have ceased labelling Gyatso as a Tibetan, choosing instead to speak of him as a trans-national, as indeed he can claim to be. In the oeuvre of the artist, his many identities under old regimes and new have certainly been explored to great effect and in this he offers us a clear picture of a life in startling transition. However, more than this the questions explored in his work, of the need in the face of our ever expanding awareness, to synthesise and develop new modes of thinking, is as relevant today for a Tibetan as it is for any aware and sensitive person. In this Gonkar Gyatso is an artist with much to offer and whose work is worthy of the utmost consideration.

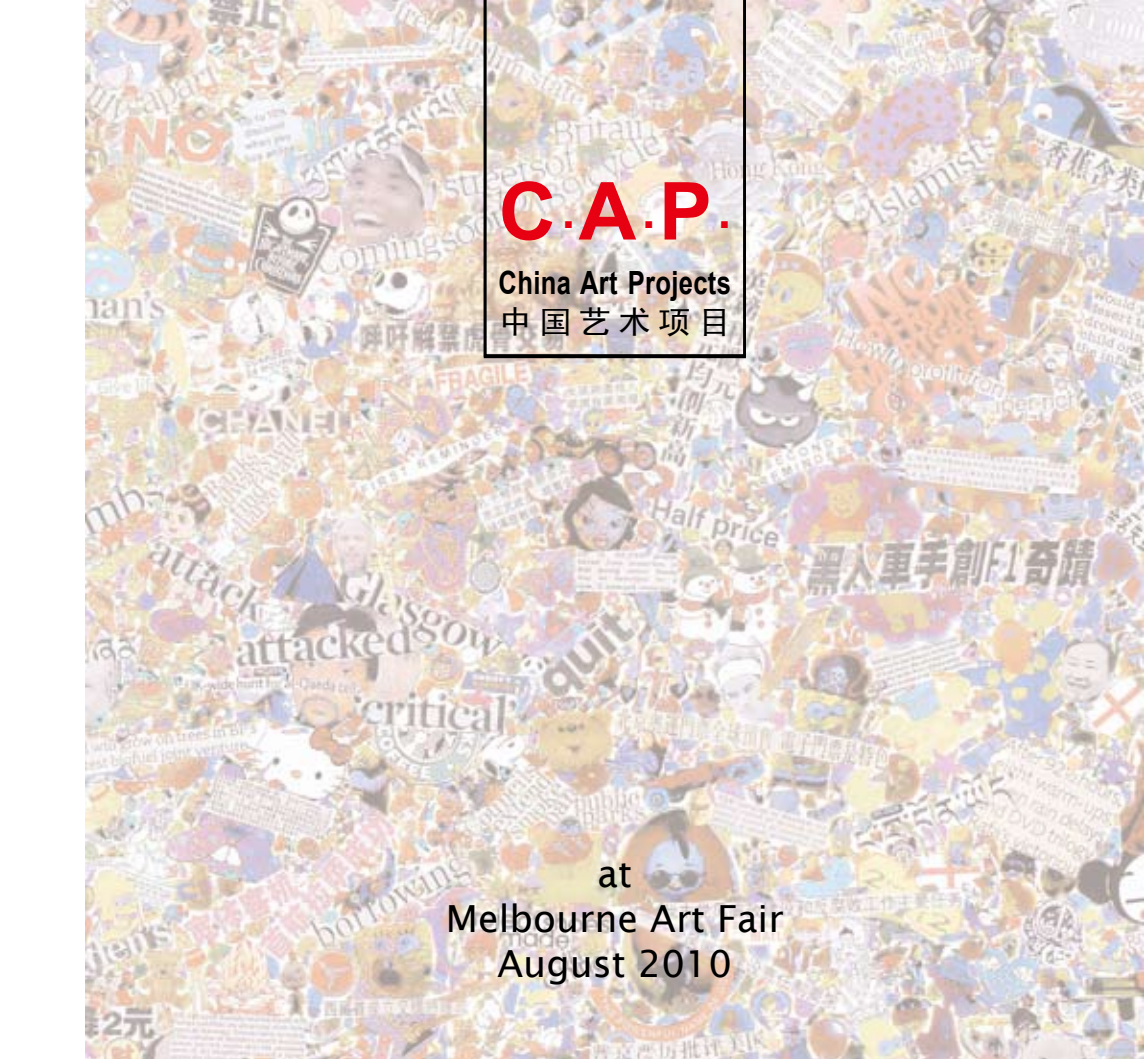
Damian Smith, Melbourne / Beijing 2010



Gonkar Gyatso *Summer Buddha* 2010 85 x 66.5cm Silk screen print



Gonkar Gyatso *Buddha in our time* 2010 85 x 68cm Silk screen print



**C.A.P.**  
China Art Projects  
中国艺术项目

at  
**Melbourne Art Fair**  
August 2010

**Deng Yifu** 1974 Born in Guangdong, China; 1994 Graduated from Guangzhou School of Light Industry, Model Design, Guangzhou, China; 1995-1997 Additional studies at Guangzhou Academy of Arts, Luxun Academy of Arts, China; Currently lives and works in Beijing, China. **solo exhibition 2009 *Borges's Tiger***. Deng Yifu's Two Paintings, Liberi Borges Institute For Contemporary Art (L.B.I.C.A), Guangzhou. **group exhibitions 2010 *Melbourne Art Fair***, represented by China Art Project, Melbourne, Australia. **2009** Young Artists Promotional Exhibition "*Re-experimentation: a Reaffirmation of Enlightenment and Will*", 798 Originality Square-Metal Warehouse, Beijing. **Asia Top Art Gallery Exhibition**, represented by China Art Projects, Seoul, Korea. **2008 *Thinghood***: Object-related Themes in Contemporary Art, Magee Art Gallery, Beijing; ***Guangzhou Station***--Special Exhibition for Contemporary Art of Guangdong, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou. **2007 *Rejected Collection***: Contemporary Art Exhibition, Ke Center for Contemporary Art, Shanghai; ***FCA-129 Guest Contemporary Art Exhibition***, Fei Contemporary Art Center, Shanghai; ***Indulgence***, Contemporary Art Exhibition, Orange Gallery, Guangzhou; ***Translucent Text***, Red Gate Gallery, Beijing. **2006 *From China***, Artists in Residence at Red Gate Gallery, 2005-2006, Red Gate Gallery, Beijing; ***New Folk Movement: Rebuilt Public Lives Contemporary Art Exhibition***, Songzhuang, Beijing; ***Second Shanghai Duolun Exhibition of Young Artists***, Shanghai Duolun Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai; ***Transfer***. Contemporary Art Exhibition, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou; ***Dislocated: Anger (T)Here***, Yonge Street, Toronto, Canada. **2005** IASK Changdong Interational Artists Exchang Program, National Art Studio Gallery, Seoul, Korea; ***Archeology of the Future***, the Second Triennial of Chinese Art, Nanjing Museum, Nanjing; ***Documentary Exhibition of Guangdong Contemporary Art Movements*** 1990~2005, He Xiangning Museum, Shenzhen, China; ***Guangzhou Qi Qiaoban - Preliminary Impressions***, Room B1203, International Binary Star Garden, Guangzhou. **2004 *Now Contemporary Art Exhibition***, Guangzhou; ***Open Attitude***: The First Youth Art Exhibition of Guangdong, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou. **2003 *Microwave Contemporary Art Exhibition***, Park-19 Art Space, Guangzhou; ***Where to Go Contemporary Art Exhibition***, Borges Libreria, Guangzhou; ***The Second Contemporary Oils Exhibition of Guangdong***, Guangzhou Art Museum, Guangzhou. **2002 *Shine of City Contemporary Art Exhibition***, Huixian Building, Guangzhou. **2001 *Start - The 2001 New Youth Painting Exhibition***, Shenzhen Museum Of Art, Shenzhen. **2000 *The First Contemporary Oil Paintings Exhibition of Guangdong***, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou. **awards and residencies** 2006 Red Gate Gallery Residency, Beijing. 2005 International Artists' Studio Program, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea. **collections** Guangdong Museum of Art; USA Hedge Fund; China Art Collection, Beijing. Private collection China, Korea, Australia.

Deng Yifu has a thing about guns. His sculptures and photos feature them, but in ways that distort their symbolic and visual power. Sometimes they are floppy rubber facsimiles, while in others they are transparent plastic toys. Of the latter, the artist has imbedded them in hard-cover tomes of wisdom, second-hand volumes hailing either from China or America. Some of these are manuals on dealing with foreign powers, theses on the administration of empires or discourses on China's recent turbulent past. As objects they are solid, dense and opaque; what some may even consider Manchurian.

In contrast, the unambiguous nature of violence, as guns plain-facedly represent, seems somehow more honest and transparent than the words of governing elites. Theorists in the political arena will recognize this perennially uttered observance - that the spheres of governance and violence ultimately go hand in hand. Countless commentators have observed it, most will agree with the artist, but none have managed to resolve it. Deceit, after all, is that which ultimately disillusion. Indeed, if duplicity in public oration can be made into physical form, then Deng Yifu has done it in these artfully refurbished pieces.

Given that art is oftentimes an ornament of 'soft diplomacy' encounters, it is refreshing to see objects that address the ubiquitous though obscured relationship between one field of rule and another. Art after all aims to test, challenge and remake the spaces of social discourse and being. Therein lies its status as a contending realm of influence, a source of illumination, and for Deng Yifu the trajectory of his latest body of work.

Damian Smith, Beijing 2010



top: Deng Yifu ***Y1145-gun*** 2003-2005 20.3 X 14.5 X 4.2cm book, perspex, screws  
left: Deng Yifu ***Ordinance Bookstore*** Installation 2006 books, perspex, boxes

#### Liu Zhuoquan – scenes inside the bottle

The production of museum-scale installations may at first glance seem incompatible with the work of Liu Zhuoquan, an artist whose practice centres on the well-known craft of snuff bottle painting. Popular items in the tourist trade, these pocket-sized vessels are painted charmingly from within; a disarming technique perfected by Chinese artisans with nothing but long-haired brushes and patiently practiced skill.

Liu Zhuoquan takes the production of these items to an epic and prodigious level, amassing them row upon row in concert with other similar items. Acquisition of these bottles is customarily a thing of individual selection, a memento of personal choice. Bringing so many together however, they register not as things precious and rare but rather as products of mass production – the efforts of nimble, anonymous hands who scabble in the markets of labour. What, one wonders, are the conditions under which items of this nature are produced?

With this in mind, Zhuoquan's project strikes one as ever more excoriating when we observe the little images inside. In place of touristy vignettes, medical diagrams of dissected organs and limbs are displayed gruesomely therein. Reminding one of the disparities between the citizens of developed nations, and those in the sweatshops of the world, the likes of which remain the basis of our global economy, what the bottles contain is not some artistic endeavour but the life, limbs and essence of the worker who toil for the amusement of others.

With the passing of the Cultural Revolution, crafts of this nature, once forbidden as decadent things of the past, steadily returned to China's bustling markets. Clearly the conditions which spored that momentous era are also attendant today. Somewhat surprisingly Marxist and Maoist ideology appears to haunt these delicate works. Created in the latest era of Chinese prosperity they contain not only images but the essence and echoes of toil. In this they take their place with the work of Chinese artists whose concern is not merely with the success of their practice but with the greater development of their nation.

Damian Smith, Beijing 2010

**Liu Zhuoquan** 1964 Born in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. Currently lives and works in Beijing, China. **selected group exhibitions 2010 *Melbourne Art Fair***, represented by China Art Project, Melbourne, Australia. ***World of Thousands***, Space Station Gallery, Beijing. **2009 *Historical Images***, Shenzhen Art Museum, Shenzhen, Hubei Art Museum, Wuhan, China. ***OUTLAW-The Spring Of Caochangdi***, Boers Li-Space, Beijing. **2008 *DEPARTURE***, Contemporary Art Exhibition of Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Macao. He Xiangning Art Museum, Shenzhen, China. ***Chinese Freedom: Contemporary Artistic Text in the Post Totalitarianism Society***, T Space, Beijing. ***ECOLOGICAL CITY***, 3<sup>rd</sup> Architectural Biennial Beijing D Park 751, Beijing. ***HOMESICKNESS***, Memory and Virtual Reality T Space, Beijing. ***FIRE POINT***, Magician Space, Beijing. ***WALKING***, EGG Gallery, Beijing. **2007 *REVEAL***, Contemporary Art Exhibition, The Excellent Art Gallery, Beijing. ***ENERGY. SPIRIT. BODY. MATERIAL***, 1<sup>st</sup> Today's Documents, Today Art Museum, Beijing. ***DESTINATION***, Wang Yi East Gallery, Shanghai. ***HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL***, A Mile International Photography Festival, France. **2006 *INTERNAL INJURIES***, The Scene and Arts, Marella Gallery, Beijing. ***CHINA / DEMOLITION***, Thinking Hands Arts Organizations, Beijing. ***ACTION MAN***, Soho Gallery, Beijing. **2005 *CHANG OF***, Middle Space Arts Center, Luoyang. **collections** White Rabbit Museum, Sydney, Australia, Today Art Museum, Beijing, China. Private collections, Australia, China, Hong Kong, England.

**Installation(detail) *World of Thousands***  
Space Station Gallery, Beijing

