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## Xi Jia – River Lethe: A Song Kun Solo Exhibition



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**City:** Beijing

**Duration:** 2008-09-27 ~ 2008-10-26

**Venue:** Boers-Li Gallery

**Participating Artist(s):** Song Kun

**Host(s):** Boers-Li Gallery

Boers-Li Gallery is pleased to announce that Song Kun will be featured in the next solo exhibition in the main space, Gallery I. Entitled Xi Jia – River Lethe, the exhibition will open to the public on 27 September and run through 26 October.

Song Kun, a graduate of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, was born in Inner Mongolia in 1977. Along with a number of her peers, her figurative painting began attracting attention through the annual N12 exhibitions as early as 2002. In 2007, she presented her project It's My Life in a solo exhibition in the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, U.S.A.

Hailed as one of the most promising young female artists during the 2005 Triennial of Chinese Art, Song Kun's work examines the minutiae of daily existence. The artist portrays an inherently individual perspective, collecting on canvas the concerns, fears, desires, growth, happiness, and confusion of daily life: the fleeting, innermost feelings of her generation. The meaning of her paintings lies in their description of both the physical and the emotional; they represent, perhaps, a sugar-coated protest against contemporary life.

While her paintings are less overtly political than many of her predecessors and contemporaries, she uses her own unique visual language to give expression to the concerns and desires of everyday life, building an archive of those moments of peak emotion, cognition, and memory. Her most recent work interprets mobility, migration, and movement as political and sentimental devices of both control and resistance that have become characteristic of life in contemporary China.

Her new work moves towards installation and sculpture, in addition to the oil painting and sketching for which she is known. This exhibition recreates the pseudo-domestic dream space with which the artist has experimented previously, although this time pushing it from a portrayal of a singular room to an entire galaxy of affect and emotion. In the darkened space of the exhibition hall, points of light emanate from the objects

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in which Song Kun has invested little bits of herself.

Collectively entitled Xi Jia and named after the recurring protagonist in many of Song Kun's works, these works embrace images of beautiful destruction, the perception of which is inextricably tied to the emotional response of the viewer. The viewer is confronted with a mixture of broken glass, cotton balls, light-colored foam, cartoon-like paintings and sketches, and antique baubles. These various pieces realign notions of beauty and maturity by putting them into dialogue with memory and emotion.

Song Kun remains entranced by the personal narratives of her present-past: the viewer finds outdated toys, the play of light over resting bodies, and train windows, all of which belong to and help create the character of the perpetually-absent Xi Jia.

Split into four categories, the rarely , monochrome fragments of life works in this solo show include: a group of paintings of train windows, light boxes engaging with beauty and violence, small graphite sketches, and oil paintings. This separation of works into groups, or perhaps stages, reflects the artist's concern with finding ways to make the process of life more manageable on a human scale: taking the individual's internal clock as the basic natural unit of time and moving through life step by step.

Other key concepts at play in these works include the lull—Song Kun's process of production involves pausing, bringing the self to rest, and reflecting—perhaps a strong tool for the viewing of her works. The show as whole serves in some ways as her diary, and in some ways as mirror—reflecting herself inward, open to the public but simultaneously locked to all but herself. It is this poetic tension in the logic of the ambivalent or the unanswerable question that drives these works, allowing the artist to come to terms with the violence of both selfhood and interpersonal relationships.

In this exhibition, light boxes, drawings, sculptures, and various artifacts of memory conspire to create an atmosphere of longing, emotion, and beauty, all glossed over by a form of destruction quite particular to the unique situation of the artist's generation of women in a changing China.

The exhibition will coincide with the release of a catalog detailing Song Kun's work over the last two years, including images of her recent works and a critical perspective on her development by theorist and critic Paul Gladston.

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[Editor] Mark Lee

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