



Chinese Bible by Yang Zhichao, Installation at at 10 Chancery Lane Gallery, Hong Kong, 2011. Courtesy of Yang Zhichao & 10 Chancery Lane Gallery.

COLLECTING SCARS AND DIARIES: READING HISTORY

By David Boyce

Diaries are interesting things. Reading other people's is a loaded experience; always personal and voyeuristic at some level. Long a source for historians, the diary also keeps history personal and enables an alternative insight into events to counter official records.

Artist Yang Zhichao is better known to me for his performance works using his body. These have included *Iron*, a work that involved having his Chinese ID card number branded on his shoulder and xxx, the surgical insertion into his abdomen and legs of various objects containing substances such as ashes and pencil shavings.

Dominating the space at 10 Chancery Lane is an installation of some 3,000 personal diaries that Yang has collected from second hand shops in

China. Written between 1949 and 1999, these diaries by unknown Chinese citizens cover three important periods in recent Chinese history. Alongside the diaries are framed, delicately rendered drawings of pages from the diaries in red pencil. These offer seemingly random snippets and interesting perspectives into the project. Looking deeper, the images reveal the social and political changes over 50 years. Yang talks in the excellent show catalogue of how the diaries chronicle a change in the Chinese psyche from a common display of one political tendency to a more discursive approach after 1979.

Flipping through them unearths an abundance of riches, even to someone who reads very little Chinese. Pages of hand written Russian words with their (assumed) Chinese translations; black and white family photographs, one book opens with the words to the song *My Darling Clementine*, and long periods of blank pages followed by short bursts of writing. Some diaries have every page crammed with writing while others with a few pages, then nothing; not unlike my few attempts to keep a diary.



Above, left & right: Selected content from the notebooks in *Chinese Bible* by Yang Zhichao at 10 Chancery Lane Gallery, Hong Kong, 2011. Courtesy of Yang Zhichao & 10 Chancery Lane Gallery.

Contrasting the almost pastoral feeling of the installation is the sharp jolt that is experienced when you step into the small back room and are confronted with a series of documentary images of Yang's body modification performances. These cover a range of performances and dem-



onstrate the artist's commitment to the continued use of his body as a vessel for his work. An engaging and challenging show.

Yang Zhichao, *Chinese Bible* until December 2 at 10 Chancery Lane.



Performers Are Not Allowed by Mok Wai Hong.
Main canvas-oil and acrylic on linen, 115 x 200 cm with frame;
Drawing-115 x 45 cm with frame, 2010-11

MAKING HEADLINES

By David Boyce

Art should sometimes have the ability to amuse you as much as make you think. Sometimes it can do both, as in the case of this show by Beijing based Hong Kong artist Mok Wai Hong. Utilising a wide variety of media - painting, painted construction and sculpture - combined with materials such as wood, canvas, glass, bronze and Astroturf, Mok looks at the news media and its unreality.

For some of the works, Mok has collaborated with other artists. A series of small bronzes from the *Sniper* series were made in conjunction with William Tsang. A delightful painting *I realize Hong Kong society looks very positive* was done in collaboration with Chow Chun Fai (who selected the image from a documentary by Machi Ma and Tozer Pak Sheung Chuen) and Tozer Pak Sheung Chuen (who selected the quote). His other collaboration is with comic



888 by Mok Wai Hong.
Drawing on acrylic board, 21.5 x 13.5 cm, 2010-11.



Positive HK by Mok Wai Hong and Chow Chun Fai, Oil on acrylic board on canvas, 120 x 120 cm (125 x 125 cm with frame), 2011.

artist Li Chi Tak. The collaborations demonstrate the benefits that working with other artists can bring to a work in pushing the boundaries and encouraging artists to take risks.

Whilst some of the works are traditional paintings, the majority of them are three-dimensional in that they are multi layered tableaux. This occurs on a physical and intellectual level. Works are on multiple, individual, computer or laser cut forms that build a sense of depth, and in some cases, a sense of unreality around

the image. Sometimes pieces are made up of two separate parts, such as in *888* and *Sniper Series No 1*, which both show an object being photographed, but that object is not seen. You have to look around the gallery to find the hidden subject. The show is also accompanied by an entertaining text piece in the style of a newspaper called the *Mock Morning Post* that doubles as a catalogue.

Turn Around, solo exhibition by Mok Wai Hong, Schoeni Art Gallery until November 14th.



A través del Espejo by Naia del Castillo, Plastic gloves with a photographic printed cotton cover, 65 x 15 x 5 cm, unique piece, 2010.

HOLLY ORNAMENTS AND SEDUCTIVE NATURE

By David Boyce

Naia del Castillo is an artist whose practice could be best described as interdisciplinary, utilising sculpture, performance and photography.

Photography printed on Mirror, 25 cm diameter, unique piece, 2010.
Lambda Photography, 100 x 100 cm, unique piece, 2010.

The works often begin as an object, generally hand made by the artist, which then becomes part of a performance that is photographed. In some cases the making of the object appears to be the performance. In others the photographing of the object, generally as part of an interaction with a model, can suffice.

Her work covers a range of areas; intimacy, seduction, the body, domesticity and ideas of traditional women's work, ornamentation, beauty,



sex and power and is full of subtle references to art history and to religious symbolism.

There is intelligence in her conceptual work that is matched by the commitment to the craft and workmanship in the realisation of the final, physical works. These are represented in this show by a series of beautifully realised, lusciously coloured photographs. Both large and small, they show a mature and well developed sense of scale and its corresponding importance to presentation. In most cases the

photographs are accompanied by the physical articles or artefacts that are central to the images. A hand painted mirror, gloves or a garment sown with a multitude of pearls.

Works that appealed to me were a series of 24 silk squares screen-printed with images of faces and then hand embroidered with representations of snakes, plants, birds and insects. Another work shows a woman lying down, cloaked in a gold garment covered in pearls, while a larger than life magpie is eyeing up the beauty before it. In front of the image, lying in a vitrine like a holy relic, is the same gold garment.

This show is intelligent, well made and carefully presented.

Altered Perceptions, by Naia del Castillo, Iivetomorrow, until November 15th.



Top, left: *Narciso* and top, right: *El Encuentro* by Naia del Castillo, Luxachrome lambda photography, acid free mounting, 35 x 35 cm, 2011.

La Urraca by Naia del Castillo, Luxachrome lambda photography, acid free mounting, 88 x 125 cm, 2005.