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ZHAO NENGZHI

CONFESSIONAL FIGURATION

Essay by Jonathan Goodman

On View from June 3, 2008

Opening reception on June 5, 2008, 6:00 - 8:00 pm

ChinaSquare Gallery is pleased to present Zhao Nengzhi: Confessional Figuration, on view from June 3, 2008.

Born in the early 1960s, Zhao Nengzhi belongs to a generation old enough to remember the Cultural Revolution and has been shaped by the disappointments of Tiananmen Square. His disturbed, disturbing faces act as troubled witnesses to a culture filled with the wish for things. Interestingly, however, the terms of the figures' disaffection and anomie is essentially private rather than public; Zhao's red faces, painted in sizes large enough to evoke landscape, do not rely on external references to make their point; instead, hardship has been internalized, so that Zhao's portraits communicate mostly psychological distress.

Zhao's figures wrestle with an unspoken grief that seems inexorable and overwhelming; figuration here gives him the room to paint and sculpt in broadly engaged terms, which beg the question: Why such alienation in an environment of abundance and greater personal freedom? Zhao's strength is that he refuses to give answers to such a question, referring the query back to his audience. The sheer rawness of the artist's red heads emphasizes coarse features and troubled dispositions, which many would see as evidence of social hopelessness.

A fully illustrated catalogue accompanies this exhibition. For more information please contact the gallery at info@chinasquareny.com.