

MIAO JIAXIN

Julie Meneret Contemporary Art is pleased to announce *The Artist is Not Available*, a solo show by Miao Jiaxin, May 28 to June 15. The artist began his career as a street photographer in Shanghai, and since coming to New York Miao has expanded his view of urban streets toward a more conceptual public stage, where his works travel across different media, beginning with the artist's own body. His work focuses on relationships of power, visibility, identity, and the circulation of capital.

For Miao's show at the gallery, he has constructed a false ceiling that acts as storage for his photographs. The gallery itself has no artworks on view save for footage from surveillance cameras mounted in the ceiling. His photographs are available in the form of a catalogue, one of the mediated channels through which artworks are apprehended. Interaction with artwork has now become highly mediated, and often the art object itself sits in storage while its image travels. Increasingly the art object itself sits in storage while its image travels. Much of Miao's recent work has been performance; when the work of art *is* the artist's body, the nature of this journey changes, as does its destination. Miao questions the place of the artist in a market that generally obscures the maker from the product.

His audacious activities that respond to systems of capital include a long resistance to embeddedness in the art market; he posits the artist as one who stays distant from governing or cultural authorities. The title of his show typifies this confrontation. *The artist is not available*, and neither is his work; the body enacting a performance is not for sale. This show takes as its subject "availability"—the artworks are invisible except via surveillance imaging and promotional reproductions. The photographs themselves show Miao's abjected body hidden among New York City debris. What does it mean for art to be available? Visible? Physically present, obtainable for ownership, conceptually accessible, vulnerable?

Installed in the gallery is an inflatable pool, the still surface and the motionless surveillance feed are the silent aftermath of the live performance that inaugurated the show on the evening of May 28. As this performance shifted through its dramatic incidents, it left behind the detritus of a strange symbolic birth. Miao's performance at Julie Meneret Contemporary Art registers in at least two simultaneously conflicting modes: consider the paradox of declaring unavailability through a spectacular emergence into the public eye. The performance is inspired by his late 2013 "News", in which he undergoes a ritualistic washing, after breaking through the ceiling enclosure. He used wet *Wall Street Journals* to swab his skin, leaving ashy ink stains on his face, his chest, his rear, and his feet. Miao attempted to wash his body with newsprint and red wine, leaving him more stained than before. In an important work from 2011, he hand-laundered and ironed 19,909 dollar bills with the artist Heeran Lee to pay one semester of SAIC tuition. A modern obsession with cleanliness is coupled with the vapid muck of consumerism, a kind of stain that cannot be scrubbed. As a final gesture for *The Artist is Not Available*, Miao donned the guise of a stoic hairless Chinese businessman and stood like a mannequin in the gallery window, newly anointed and symbolically reborn into the welcoming arms of the commercial art world.

Miao speaks fluently by manipulating heavily coded symbols like cash, a business suit, blood, newspaper, or in other examples, a suitcase, clocks, cigarettes, and porn. The capacity for honesty of the human body makes it the ideal medium to navigate such sedimented layers of meaning. With deadpan acuity, Jiaxin is able to pierce through the symbolic overload of these props, coming to inhabit a space of true significance.