

## Naama Tsabar

Dvir, Tel Aviv

In this exhibition Israeli artist Naama Tsabar continues to pursue her interest in reconciling sound art with sculpture. In the past she has addressed this connection by presenting musical instruments, including the human voice, as objects of profound sculptural presence as well as organs of sound. Here her focus has evolved into something more ambitious and complex.

On the face of it, the show twists the visual alphabet of modern American art, from the color fields painter Kenneth Noland to the Minimalism of Robert Morris, whose playfulness and interactivity with the viewer — not to mention his use of felt — are once again bodied forth here. The walls are hung with monochromes that serve simultaneously as sound art to be activated. Some of these, for example *Transition* (2016), require plugging in, while others, such as *Work on Felt (Variation 11)* *Dark Blue* (2016), a wall work connected to an amplifier, encourage their strings to be plucked that they might be “played.”

By contrast, *Barricade #2* (2016) comprises three sets of four microphones on stands angled toward the center of the room. Linked by wires to speakers next to the walls, these ominous black fixtures — the wires are secured to the floor with black tape — radiate outward to form a massive in-the-round geometrical abstraction. The arrangement of microphones wills the spectator to the interior of the space, just as the extended trails of wire, carefully delineated on a floor of monochrome sienna, provoke in the viewer a feeling of the oceanic. *Work on Felt (Variation 12)* (2016), a kind of “soft painting” in burgundy, provides a vertical counterpoint that enhances the impression of a total installation. The space seems to exist as a sounding board whereby audio technology retains formal structure while remaining a tool for the most abstract art of all.

by Nicola Trezzi

## Chen Shaoxiong

Boers-Li and Tang Contemporary, Beijing

Sadly, Chen Shaoxiong passed away this past November, just as two solo shows in Beijing were cementing his formidable legacy. Occupying two adjacent galleries, the Boers-Li exhibition offered a historical overview of Chen's work from 1991 to the present, whereas the show at Tang Contemporary displayed recent paintings and a multichannel video installation. They follow two high-profile institutional reappraisals of Chen's work in Guangzhou and Shanghai.

This artist and founding member of the Big Tail Elephant Collective deviated from the more muscular contemporary tendencies that developed in China after 1989, which often slipped acerbic social critique into iconic representational paintings and allegorical performances. Chen's work was more mercurial, registering the changes in his surroundings — rapid developments in manufacturing and trade alongside an accelerated urban growth in his home province of Guangdong — with the diligence and charm of a TV antenna. *72.5 hours of electricity consumption* (1992) was a large-scale installation of anthropomorphic neon-light sculptures dressed in ponchos and bearing panels time-stamped to 1992. These crude stick figures, buzzing with character, were evocative of the outdoor market stalls where Chen's artist friends would often gather and drink, indexing a time marked by creative spark. In *Change the Channel, Change the Bride's Decision* (1994), a metal console on which a bridal dress hangs beneath a TV monitor, the artist reveals himself as a kind of strange cross-fertilization between Duchamp and early video artist Nam June Paik.

Crossing between video-based sculpture and sculptural photography, and from photographic paintings to ink-based animations, the diversity of Chen's work means it resists definition. Sharing conceptual affinity with Fluxus, it continues to influence younger artists today; indeed, this was the message of the Boers-Li show. By contrast, the more sanitized display at Tang Contemporary affirmed the opposite, enveloping Chen's recent output within a time capsule of professionalism.

by Amy Lien and Enzo Camacho

## He Xiangyu

Kaikai Kiki and SCAI The Bathhouse, Tokyo

Twentieth-century Minimalism sought an advanced aesthetic by reducing formal elements. Today, Chinese-born He Xiangyu explores our most elementary perceptual and physiological reactions through his performative practice. His own formal reductions — in one instance boiling down 127 tons of Coca-Cola to black sludge — have often verged on the ludicrous.

The centerpiece at SCAI The Bathhouse is a set of three large-scale “prints” joined end to end, occupying the gallery's largest wall (all works cited 2016). The artist's ink footprints are visible at intervals across the vast sheets of white paper, as the work's three titles (*My Feet 160708, 161112* and *160102*) trace the dates on which the artist made his marks. By contrast, *Olive Oil – Past Is Prologue* is a grayish oblong of smeared olive oil, an “oil field” whose faint odor of oxidization is as much a lure for mosquitos as it is a pun on modernism's past.

Xiangyu's show at Kaikai Kiki Gallery, famously run by Takashi Murakami, benefits from his works' incongruity within the setting, which includes traditional tatami floor mats. The video *100% Cotton* shows a close-up of a man's crotch, his erection poking up beneath cotton briefs, while another video, *I don't know you, you don't know me*, documents a casually clad man lying on his back on a Berlin street as passersby look on unperturbed, cognizant of the artist's camera. Both shows include paintings of lemons in acrylic on canvas, whose blank forms evoke loopholes within lemon-yellow color fields. Their impact jolts the retina with an uncanniness that is compounded by the act of perambulating barefoot around the gallery on straw mats. Xiangyu's is an acidly nonsensical approach that ends up parodying his own exhibition's title: “Save the Date.”

by Satoru Nagoya



From top:  
Naama Tsabar  
*Work On Felt (Variation 13), Grey* (2016)  
Courtesy of the Artist and Dvir Gallery, Tel Aviv/Brussels  
Photography by Elad Sarig

Chen Shaoxiong  
“The Views: New Work by Chen Shaoxiong,” installation view at Tang Contemporary Art, Beijing (2016)  
Courtesy of the Artist and Tang Contemporary Art, Beijing

He Xiangyu  
“Save the Date,” installation views at SCAI The Bathhouse, Tokyo (2016)  
Courtesy of the Artist and SCAI The Bathhouse, Tokyo  
Photography by Nobutada Omote