

Galerie Daniel Templon

Paris

HE AN

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He An:

I Am Curious Yellow I Am Curious Blue

Tang Contemporary, Beijing

16 July - 16 August

With three exhibitions across the Chinese capital, He An is spreading himself thick this summer. *Wind Light as a Thief* is at Arrow Factory wherein passersby can flick a switch to operate a street lamp that protrudes from the gallery window, as well as the lights in a local shop and another light in an undisclosed location nearby. Meanwhile, Magician Space gallery has been walled off completely save for a passageway to the lavatory; its width corresponds to the thickness of the bodies of two female staff. Unseen connections, spatial interference and the hijacking of urban appliances and pop culture titles: these are the building blocks of He An's artworks.

Less idiosyncratic than the other two exhibitions, *I Am Curious Yellow I Am Curious Blue* at Tang centres on the wreckage of an LED sign dropped from the roof of a building. Reassembled in a side room exactly as they landed are the blue and yellow characters for Miho Yoshioka, An's favourite Japanese erotic idol; behind them is a slow-exposure photograph recording the fall. So far, so postmodern. In the main hall, large dismembered LED signs are positioned in a sedate junk-metal tableau flanked by an oil drip and a blackened metal frame dangling a thin fluorescent light. Presiding messianically over all at ceiling height is a luminescent blue circle crowned with a yellow rainbow. The arrangement as a whole is an astute exercise in composition which exploits the aestheticising ambience of the clean white cube – coupled with the latent spirituality accorded to primary colours and light fittings by Piet Mondrian and Dan Flavin – to bestow an attitude of reverent repose over the assembled dystopian jetsam.

In the past, An has employed neon signage to construct slogans of direct emotional appeal in the public realm. A red sign saying 'Miss you, please call me' in Chinese followed by the digits of his own mobile phone number was erected on a roadside in Shenzhen in 2000; hundreds dialled. But this kind of human connection is absent at Tang – in its place, a residual romanticism surrounds the destructive effort of breaking and transposing these L.E.D.s into the gallery's protective environment. The artist is 'nomadic' in his interests; but nomadism treads a cyclical path. To pitch the name of a favourite star off a building only to reassemble it again in a cross between a crime scene and kitsch veneration entails an attitude oscillating between detachment and affection, carelessness and longing. Contemporary celebrities – high and low – will rise and fall. History repeats itself, and cultural products are trashed and rehashed. Ironically or not, it seems that the untaught lyricism An is trying to summon here is unforthcoming: poetry fails to transcend the bashed-up urban props and cultural references he has pulled from the cluttered context of our so-called post-post era. Amid simmering August heat oddly fitting for his work, all three solo exhibitions will end within two days of each other – like switching off a light.

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