

Li Songsong

One of My Ancestors

October 25 – December 21, 2019

540 West 25th Street

Second Floor

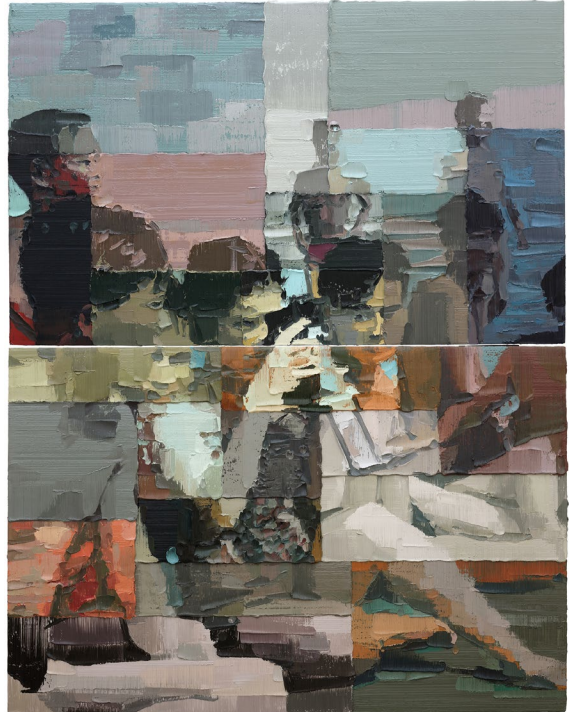
New York

Opening Reception:

Thursday, Oct 24

6–8 PM

Li Songsong, *South*, 2017, oil on canvas, 10' 9-15/16" x 8' 6-3/8"
(330 cm x 260 cm) © Li Songsong, courtesy Pace Gallery



New York — Pace Gallery is pleased to present the first solo exhibition in the US since 2011 of renowned Chinese artist Li Songsong. The exhibition features his most recent works—canvases whose thick layers of paint depict everyday scenes as well as historical imagery culled from found photographs. Li’s paintings point to China’s many transformations, but eschew narrative in order to emphasize the way images operate as nebulous fragments of a history that is open to interpretation. The exhibition will be on view on the 2nd floor of Pace’s new flagship building at 540 West 25th Street from October 25 to December 21, 2019, with an opening reception with the artist on October 24.

In the process of reinterpreting found imagery drawn from public sources such as everyday news items, Li adopts an impartial attitude. “I did not deliberately look for these images,” he explains, “It just happened. For example, a friend of mine went to an old book stall in Beijing to buy old magazines. I saw a good photo, and then I used it. I don’t seem to care about the content of the image itself. Of course, they are a starting point, but they will affect you more on a psychological level than in a narrative way.”

Li is interested in the ways in which images can trigger memories and emotions—a psychological impact magnified by his technique. The use of impasto and the dense materiality of his brushstrokes elicit a potent haptic response, while his palette of cool shades of gray, green, and beige create an estrangement from his chosen subject matter, as seen in *The A Little Brother* (2017), *South* (2017), and *Civil Rather than Military* (2018). Through his signature use of compact blocks of color, Li deconstructs and reassembles images, pushing his art towards abstraction.

This exhibition also presents works that signal the artist's exploration of new subject matter—images oriented toward individualized experience and private life rather than collective memory and the public sphere. *Zorro* (2019), for instance, depicts the artist's pet dog, who recently passed away. The ashes of the animal's cremated body are the focus of another piece, *Bone to Ash* (2019). Deviating from his usual strategy of finding inspiration in widely circulated photography, Li turns to a poignant personal event that, despite its specificity, addresses questions with universal resonance—death, love, and memory. A similar work, *Owga (III)* (2019), offers a close-up of the back of a human head. The impossibility of seeing the figure's countenance creates a sense of unbridgeable distance and alienation—an impenetrability literalized by the work's unyielding strata of paint.


Li Songsong's (b. 1973, Beijing) paintings animate the fragmentary nature of images and memory, paying particular attention to the people, events, and themes of modern and contemporary Chinese history. Li is interested in the way images cultivate histories and provoke memories, even when the reference to the past is nebulous and indirect. Although his compositions draw on found imagery—with a range of sources including restaurant advertisements, historical photographs, and movie stills, among others—Li freely reinterprets his sources, altering or omitting visual information. The resulting works eschew narratives, presenting pieces and traces of something rather than a totalizing record, prompting new ways of looking at existing information. He has been included in numerous international exhibitions at institutions including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; MoMA PS1, New York; the Saatchi Gallery, London; UCCA, Beijing; the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum; the Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland; and the Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany. The artist currently resides and works in Beijing.


Pace is a leading contemporary art gallery representing many of the most significant international artists and estates of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.


Under the leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace is a vital force within the art world and plays a critical role in shaping the history, creation, and engagement with modern and contemporary art. Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy for vibrant and dedicated relationships with renowned artists. As the gallery approaches the start of its seventh decade, Pace's mission continues to be inspired by our drive to support the world's most influential and innovative artists and to share their visionary work with people around the world.

Pace advances this mission through its dynamic global program, comprising ambitious exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, and curatorial research and writing. Today, Pace has seven locations worldwide: two galleries in New York, including its newly opened global flagship gallery at 540 West 25th Street; one in London; one in Geneva; one in Palo Alto, California; one in Hong Kong; and one in Seoul.

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