

31 August 2020

TONG  
KUNNIAO  
*Just Stay  
in the Cold*



1. Tong Kunniao,  
*Studio View*  
© Hua International



2. Tong Kunniao,  
*Portrait*  
© Hua International

11 September 2020 – 12 December 2020

*Opening: Thursday, 10 September 2020, 3–8 PM*

With the new name *Hua International* – formally XC·HuA – the gallery starts with two great news in the fall season: the opening of a new gallery space in the heart of Beijing's arts district 798 and a solo exhibition in two chapters with the artist *Tong Kunniao* in Berlin. *JUST STAY IN THE COLD* will be the Beijing-based artist's first exhibition with the gallery, as well as his first show in Berlin.

In China, **Tong Kunniao** (\*1990) is one of the most sought-after artists of a generation whose works clearly stand out from those of previously known Chinese artists. **Tong Kunniao** is concerned with breaking out of social structures, which is reflected in the title of his exhibition. Delimiting a space for outsiders, the expression *Just Stay In The Cold* refers to the Chinese phrase “哪凉快, 哪呆着去” (literally “go where it’s cool”), or “go jump in the lake”. Tong – himself a flâneur, poet, globetrotter, and free spirit – is fascinated by life as an outsider, by living on the fringes of society.

Firmly ensconced within the *post-medium condition*, Tong’s work extends beyond formal boundaries to encompass sculpture, performance, painting, photography, and poetry – sometimes even within the parameters of a single work. **Tong Kunniao** makes use of products of our throwaway society: For him, the endless supply of objects that end up in resale shops, flea markets, and dumpsters form a substructure for the semiotics of the built world. He describes this seemingly limitless flow of consumer goods as a “bad infinity” and the role of the artist as a scatological scavenger who performatively explores its depths. In his sensual and obstinate objects, we associatively experience the special traces and stories found or imagined in his scavenged materials—and what they reveal about a city and its people.

Equipment and small machines brought from China serve as a framework for the new mixed media works that will be shown in the **Hua International**. In the interplay of kinetic experiment, contemporary Wunderkammer (Cabinet of curiosities) and installation art, Tong creates a re-enchantment of our material world and challenges the viewer to rethink our consumption-driven value system in a playful way.

The two parts of **Tong Kunniao**’s exhibition each foreground the fragility of equilibrium, playing upon the precarity of categorical distinctions related to value, use, and destruction as well as the myriad balancing acts that we encounter in our daily lives: finding balance within the self, within one’s community, and with the other. Structured as a call and response, the two chapters revolve around the notions of *Dasein* [existence] and *Geworfenheit* [thrownness]. A concept introduced by Heidegger, the state of “thrownness” connotes the arbitrary and erratic aspects of existence. As the artist himself notes, “the play of human existence revolves around the possibility of being thrown in the world, of being abandoned. We are ‘thrown’ into the world, and we have to deal with what is thrown at us. “Following this motto, the second chapter of the exhibition functions as a reconfiguration and expansion of the works and concepts introduced in the first chapter—highlighting the elemental instability of life in a rapidly changing world.



Hua International’s  
new space in Beijing.  
© Hua International

**Tong Kunniao** completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Sculpture Institute of the China Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA). Since then he has had exhibitions in museums like the Yuz Museum, Shanghai, the PowerLong Museum, Shanghai or Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, Peking. Tong lives and works in Beijing.

**Hua International** is a contemporary art gallery based in Berlin and Beijing. Founded by Hua Xiaochan in 2017, the gallery inspired by its founder's years inside the Chinese punk community is non-hierarchical and instead driven by a collaborative ethos that includes a team of scholars, independent curators, and the arts management of her partner Klaus Dierkes. The cosmopolitan program is artist-led across its two spaces, with a special emphasis on complex cross-disciplinary, time-based, performative, and socially-engaged practices. The gallery has positioned itself at the epicenter of two vibrant art districts. In Berlin, it is located in a historic, pre-war building situated in Potsdamer Strasse; in Beijing, the gallery relocated to the acclaimed 798 Arts District in August 2020. The gallery focuses on developing long-term relationships with its represented artists and leverages its bi-location as a means to critically expand how their work can be presented and received in radically diverse cultural contexts. Hua's vision is to stimulate a dialogue between the artist-centered communities in Beijing and Berlin, to break the boundaries between dominant and undervisible peripheral practices, with the purpose of closing the gap between center-and-periphery dynamics that no longer serve the pioneering and unique art practices emerging in these two art capitals. **Hua International** also hosts curatorial projects and artistic collaborations in order to pursue new avenues of production, discourse and promotion of contemporary art. In a time of tectonic shifts in the art world, flexibility, experimentation and collaboration are key components of the gallery's model.

**HUA**  
INTERNATIONAL

#### **Hua International**

##### **BERLIN**

Potsdamer Strasse 81B, 10785 Berlin

+49 (0) 30 2579 2410

Opening Times: Tuesday-Saturday: 12-6 PM

##### **BEIJING**

D08-3, 798 East Road, 798 Art Zone,

2 Jiuxianqiao Road, Chaoyang District, Beijing

+86 (0) 170 6045 5427

Opening Times: Wednesday-Sunday: 12-6 PM

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