

**The
Rep** REPERTORY
THEATRE
ST. LOUIS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



XIONG COLLECTIVE

PRESENTS

MAR 7 : DEVIL IN A RED DRESS
THROUGH : A HYBRID THEATRE/
MAR 25 : ART INSTALLATION PRESENTATION

WELCOME

Lin Bo was born in Shanghai in 1976. He is a Chinese conceptual artist most often associated with the so-called "confrontation" movement. In 2014 he was imprisoned for two years as a direct result of his art piece Rally. Upon his release he immigrated to the United States, where he became associated with the Xiong Collective. His work has been seen at various galleries but also many impromptu locations in New York, San Francisco, Minneapolis and, most recently, St. Louis.

Devil in a Red Dress represents a breakthrough for Lin Bo, whose work has confounded and dazzled American audiences since his U.S. debut just two years ago. His pieces have always been strongest when they depict his years of creative struggle and ultimate incarceration in his native China. The welcome return to this theme results in the dynamic and majestic installation you now view.

The video piece (center panels) depicts women in white gloves and red painted hands handling processed foods combined with footage of Chinese factory workers and a government parade. The women handling the food clearly symbolize China's highly exploited manufacturing labor force, as controversially depicted in Mike Daisy's *The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs*. The processed food is an imitation, or perhaps a fantasy, of real foods with little nutritional value and can be mass produced at a fraction of the price. It is designed to produce but ultimately fails to provide.

The piece's title, *Devil in a Red Dress*, is inspired from the 1990 mystery novel *Devil in a Blue Dress*, by Walter Mosely, which has also inspired a film starring Denzel Washington and a hit song by hip-hop artist Kanye West. In the novel, a murder mystery, a seductive "femme fatale" helps a private detective lead himself to his own demise. Kanye West took this perhaps a step further, creating a concept album that dissects the distinctions between the fantasies of celebrity life and its unforeseeable cruel realities. Both stories create realities veiled by fantasy and have dangerous and consequential outcomes due to their fraudulent nature. The video here can be regarded as the centerpiece of the installation, as it so ably embodies the metaphors that govern the other works.

The color red is throughout the installation, clearly reminding us of the authoritative repression from which Lin Bo has fled. Gold is also prominent; on the Chinese Flag, there is, in fact, a gold star tethering four smaller gold stars on a red surface.

In *Restricted Area, Fake Dreams* the artificial grass and gold frame represent luxuries that can only be imagined and not experienced for prisoners such as Lin Bo, from 2014-2016. Ironically, even the fantasy of the grass and gold frame is false, given one a sense of the lost hope he must have experienced at that time. Some notable phrases include "The Big(red) Dream(s)" and "Foxconn Longhau." The latter is a now famous manufacturing company whose workers have committed suicide in large numbers, again, as controversially depicted in Mike Daisy's work, *The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs*. These phrases expertly weave both positive inspirations and dark realities.

Both *Beguiled* and *A Mirror on Every Wall* share the commonality of illusion. *Beguiled* appears as a scaled up exaggeration of a rock made of natural or real gold, while *A Mirror on Every Wall*'s silvery surface mimics a mirror that reflects a distorted imitation. In addition, the joss paper used for the piece is a highly flammable paper often decorated with silver and gold that is burned in a ceremony to contribute fortune to lost ancestors in the afterlife. It is a symbol of prosperity, yet has no value to us.

The theme of imitation and illusion resonates throughout this work, one in which reality is constantly being supported by a dark and perhaps harmful fantasy. This mixture is what makes *Devil in a Red Dress Lin Bo*'s most exciting and relevant effort to date.

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XIONG COLLECTIVE

The Xiong Collective gives space and safe haven to artists of Asian descent unable, unwilling, or undesiring of conventional channels. They promote, produce and present projects that can't be shown in museums and that infiltrate any and all mediums for broadcast purposes. They defy, disrupt and dislodge the idea of gallery. You will know their exhibitions when you are in them. Visit us at www.thexiong.cn.