



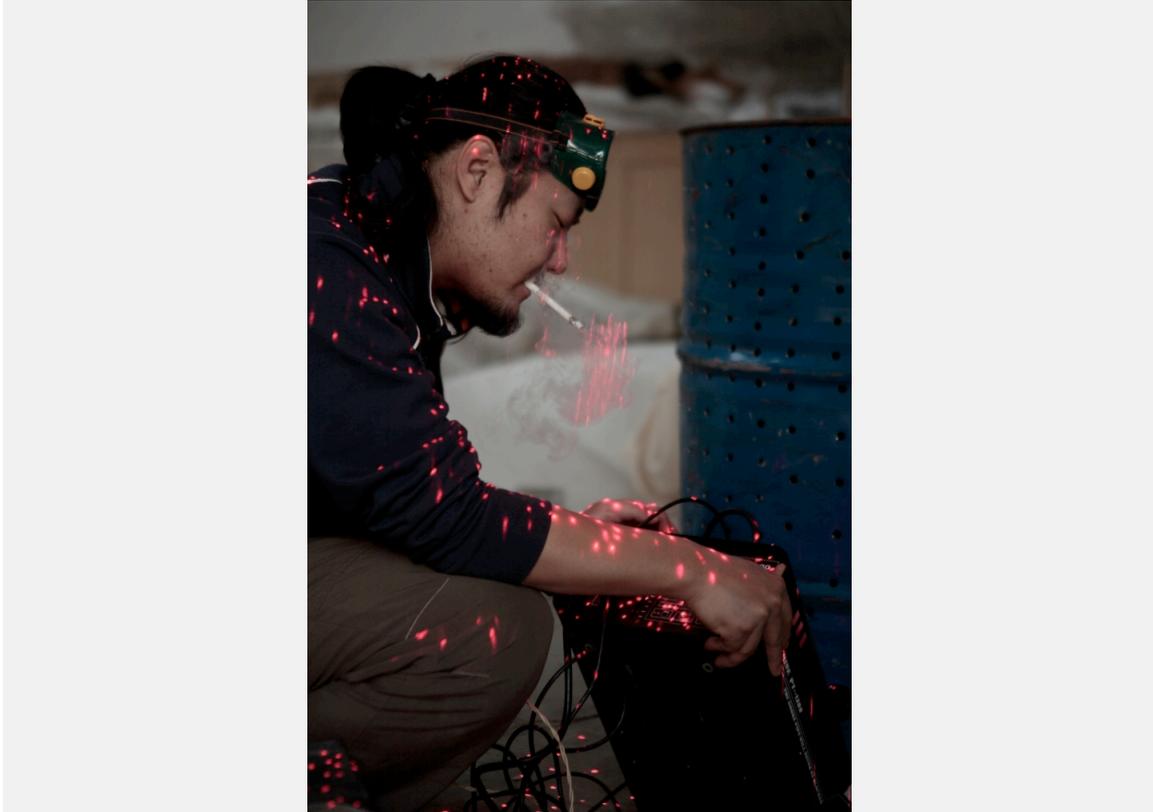
Art Radar Asia

Contemporary art trends and news from Asia and beyond

Young Chinese artist Li Hui lights up Netherlands: an Art Radar interview

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CHINESE ARTIST SOLO EXHIBITION LIGHT ART NETHERLANDS



Li Hui at work. Image courtesy of Ministry of Art.

Following his **impressive solo exhibition** last year in Mannheim, Germany, young Chinese artist **Li Hui** brings yet another surprise to the European art scene. In the pitch-dark exhibition space provided by **The Centre of Artificial Light in Art** in the Netherlands, Li Hui presents a spectacular display of four of his light works entitled "**Who's afraid of Red, Amber and Green?**". The show, which runs from 16 July to 24 October this year, showcases Li's experiments with laser and LED light.

The current show, the title of which may remind people of **Barnett Newman**'s painting ***Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue?***, exhibits four of Li Hui's

works: *Amber*, *Reincarnation*, *Cage* and *Everything Starts from Here*. The works were selected jointly by **John Jaspers** (director of The Centre of Artificial Light in Art), **Christoph and Cordelia Noe** (co-directors of The Ministry of Art who represent Li Hui) and the artist.

In an interview with the museum, printed on the museum guide, Li Hui describes his works:

"I can imagine that if someone sees my work for the first time, it can have a very strong visual impact. Just like in Newman's paintings, the bright colors first have to get stored in one's brain. I also understand that there are elements in my works that might make people feel a little puzzled or even a little scared when first confronted with them. However, from what I have experienced, it is not just the visual impact, but also the 'otherness' or their mysticism that can have this kind of result. It is somehow similar to ... Shamanism."

Art Radar Asia spoke to Li Hui about the ideas in his works, the challenges he faces and his future plans.

Light not an intended media

Specialising in sculpture at the **Central Academy of Fine Arts** in Beijing, Li Hui learnt to use stainless steel and wood but not light. In fact, he never meant to use light in all of his works, and would not call himself a light artist. It was in the process of production that he thought of light as a possible media for some of his works. He gives an example of how he came up with using LED light for ***Amber***.

"I wanted the transparent material to glow, and I found that LED light is the only light that can produce the effect I wanted. The material is also thin enough for me to install inside the work, so I used it."

Using LED light led to his discovery of the properties of laser light, a non-heating light which produces pure colors, and he started to experiment with it for other works. Light is not a usual medium for art in China or the world and Li says of this phenomenon,

"Light doesn't seem like a material that can be used in art – if you do not handle it well, the outcome will be awful. Everyone can use light in their work, but light may not always be a good material to help them express what they want to express."



"What I want to create is smoke rising from the bed softly and freely. It is a work that would evoke emotions, but this may not be obvious from photos," relays Li Hui. Readers who are interested in experiencing these emotions firsthand can click on the image to watch a video. (Please note that the video is presented in Dutch.) 'Reincarnation' (200 x 110 cm; height variable) is a sculpture made of laser lights, fog, metal and medical bandages. Image courtesy of Ministry of Art.

At this point, Li hasn't thought about specialising in light art, and says that he would use whatever materials suit his concepts. Asked about what he is going to do next, Li says that he is interested in the spiritual and the inner world. When asked whether there are particular philosophies that Li Hui wants to convey in his works, he answers no.

"I want to create feelings which cannot be expressed in languages. There are just too many works attached [to] some kind of philosophy, but to me that's not what art is about. You create feelings in art – if you can feel it, others will feel it too."



Li Hui says about his work 'Cage': "There are two cages inside the work made of laser beams. Laser beams are special in a way that they look tangible while in reality they are not. The two cages appear alternatively so that a group of people who find themselves 'trapped' in the cage in one moment would suddenly find themselves outside the cage in the next. This work brings out the contrast between reality and illusion." 'Cage' (each 200 x 200 cm; height variable) is made of laser lights, mirrors and iron. Image

courtesy of Ministry of Art.

Technological skill toughest obstacle

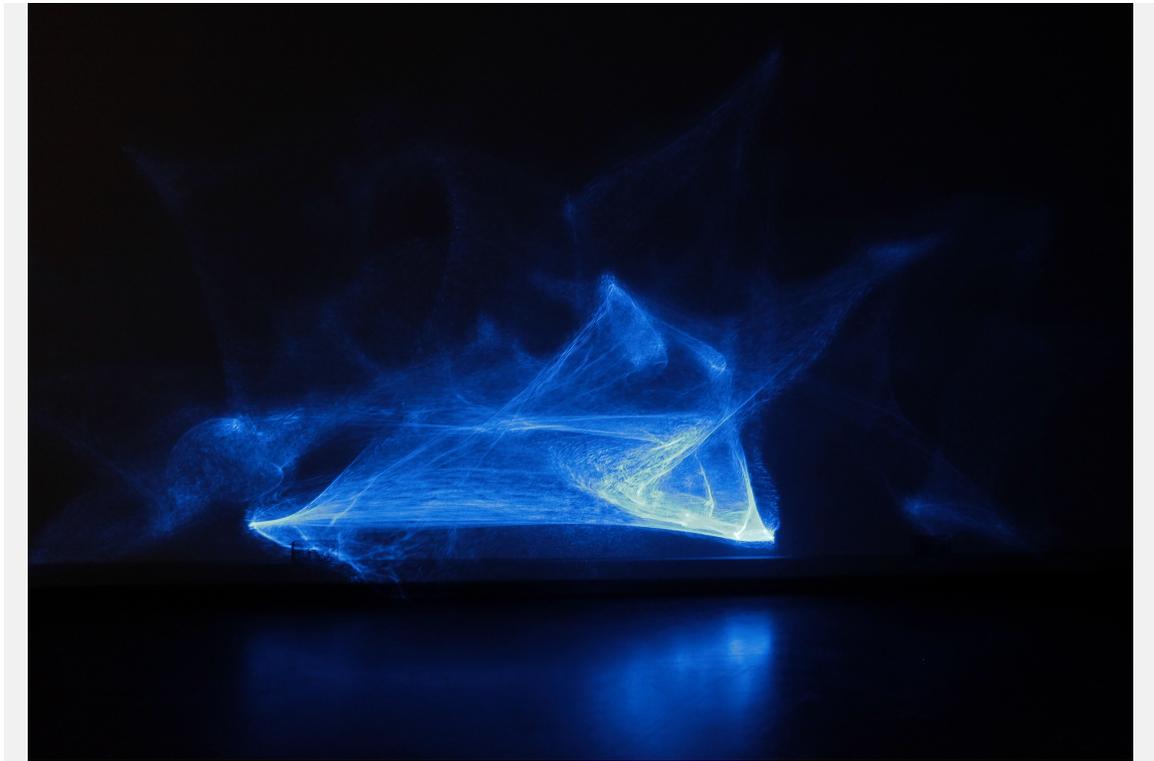
You may imagine Li Hui's laboratory crammed with a lot of professional equipment to support his experiments, but in reality he has to seek technological support from others, such as LED light producers, to create his light works. In fact, technology is one of the greatest challenges in the artist's production process.

"It is impossible to do the works in my own studio. I have to cooperate with others. I don't have their professional equipment. It is very costly.... The most difficult [thing] is skill – I am not talking about artistic skill, but technological skill. Sometimes the problems are just impossible to solve."

For Li Hui, every work is born from rounds of brain-storming followed by rounds of experiments in an effort to work through and predict potential problems.

"Experiments push toward the final outcome. At the initial stage of production, I may draw on the

computer. Then I begin experimenting with materials. For example, I test a few shots of laser beams with smoke and find the proportion that suits what I want to express.”



Li Hui says about his work 'Everything Starts From Here': "This is a discovery in an experiment. The light beams strike through the transparent dining goblets to project a very impressive light image on the wall.

Most of my works are large but this one is not because it is an experimental work." 'Everything Starts From Here' (20 x 30 x 20cm) utilises laser lights, a metal box with a crank, glass and projectors. Image courtesy of Ministry of Art.

Ministry of Art dedicated to Chinese art in Europe

Art Radar Asia spoke with Christoph Noe, one of the directors of The Ministry of Art, an art advisory and curatorial company based in China which represents Li Hui, to find out more about how European opportunities are secured for Chinese or other Asian artists.

“The Ministry of Art ... has a broader scope than [just being] a gallery. Our idea is to give artists the opportunity to cooperate with museums or art institutions in Europe ... as a lot of the Chinese artists have already had the opportunity to exhibit their works in China or Asia, and some of them lack the opportunity to exhibit in Europe. We come in with our expertise because of our European origins and networks with European institutions. Once we are excited about a Chinese artist we can find an institution that fits very well for that artist.”

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