

Cityweekend, Art Review: "The Ears Have Walls" by Gabriel Lester, text/Helen Morgan, March 2014



## Art Review: "The Ears Have Walls" by Gabriel Lester

18 March 2014

1 comments

chelseastone



### Pictures

See all 1

### Tags

art

### Share



Gabriel Lester creates drama from the ordinary in his intriguing show at Leo Xu Projects. His subtle and amusing adjustments to our familiar world invite the viewer to take a step back and look again at their surroundings with a fresh perspective.

With U.S. /Belgium roots and a base somewhere between Amsterdam and Shanghai, Lester started his career in the 1990s with a focus on cinema. His visual experiments in writing, photography and sculpture have been seamlessly arranged at Leo Xu's tucked-away space in the former French Concession.

## LEO XU PROJECTS



At the gallery's entrance, visitors are met with a line of empty suit sleeves protruding from holes in the walls. "MurMure #2" (2014) -- a play on the French word that evokes a soft whisper -- is a series of limbless garments finished with gold ear-shaped cufflinks.

These will be brought to life by performances from local musicians on March 22. The concealed installations "Sibling" (2014) and "The Eyes Have Walls" (2014), a theatrical revolving model of Shanghai that examines perspective, will be displayed sometime this spring.

The second floor is filled with sounds from the "Secret Life of Cities" (2013), a series of films inspired by the idea of being an urban predator, peering out from behind foliage. In the distance is perhaps a busy street or a hazy skyline, each with just a touch of voyeurism that does not reveal anything hidden, merely drawing attention to what is always there.



"Eavesdrop" (2014) welcomes visitors to the "Archive of a Joke"

## LEO XU PROJECTS

section. This sculptural hint of a jaw emerges from the wall to suggest the extension of the body within architecture, and is the first in a collection of objects amusingly altered by the artist. “Seeing Through” (2014) -- a bust with the eyes cut out -- and “Hole in Wall” (2014), both adapt tradition and modify perspective.

Lester’s cinematography presents performers in unusual contexts. In his grainy Super 8 film “Man of Action” (1999–2012), a mime acts out scenarios in the midst of a vast landscape: “An Untitled Incident” (2007) shows a gallery opening where guests ignore the artwork and chatter silently, alluding to art patrons as the true performers of the art world.



*“Man Holes”*

This understated exhibition is full of unexpected surprises. As engaging as it is funny, Lester’s show inspires the audience to re-explore life with a more imaginative gaze.

“The Ears Have Walls” at [Leo Xu Projects](#), through April 6

*By Helen Morgan*

--