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INFLUENCES - 18 APR 2016

Portfolio: Guo Hongwei

BY GUO HONGWEI

A Sichuan steel factory and a mineral collection in London: the Beijing-based artist shares a series of important images



Rolled sheet stainless steel being made in a factory in Sichuan province, China. Courtesy: the artist

Stainless Steel Factory, Sichuan, China

As research for a new project I went to a stainless steel factory in Sichuan province, Southwest China. The factory has advanced production lines for making high quality stainless steel sheet. The production line uses a cold-rolling method which rolls the sheet up when it has been finished. I find the whole process fascinating: the transformation of material form, the changing shapes, colours, qualities and properties. All of these transformations happen one after another on the line. It's almost like magic.



Guo Hongwei, *Snowy River*, 1989/2013, collage on paper, 79 x 106 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Leo Xu Projects, Shanghai

Carl Andre's *Snowy River*

I always find collage to be a good way to read images, no matter whether the image is abstract or narrative. I was staring at this image of Carl Andre's *Snowy River* (1983) in a catalogue and it struck me that, with minimal intervention, I could create an image on the image without adding or reducing information. Andre's minimal sculpture gave me the outline of a shape to cut, and the cuts gave shape to spaces. The result looks like more steel plates are growing from the ones lying on the floor, but it's all happening on the surface of the image.

LEO XU PROJECTS



Tom Friedman, *Untitled*, 1996,
polystyrene tower, 81 x 91 x 91 cm.
Courtesy: Luhring Augustine
Gallery, New York

Tom Friedman, *Untitled*

We transform material with our actions everyday and even transform our selves from second to second. Materials transform too of course, but far slower, Humans seem to be constantly finding ways to instigate change and accelerate it. Tom Friedman's works during the 1990s are good examples of how an artist guides the transformation of material in a humorous direction. These works also have a good balance between the conceptual and the visual, a nice escape from mind / body dualism.



Jérôme Bel, *Disabled Theater*, performance documentation, 2014, Frieze Projects in partnership with Dance Umbrella, London.
Photograph: Ursula Kaufmann

Jérôme Bel's *Disabled Theater*

Jérôme Bel's performance *Disabled Theater* is the only piece of contemporary art which has made me want to cry. I saw it towards the end of 2013, as part of Perfoma, when I was visiting New York. All of the performers in it have different cognitive disabilities. Not your typical professional dancers, their actions are distinct from an expected 'standard' and makes you question what that 'standard' really is. Their movements seem truer, from a place of pure enjoyment. It's an amazing piece. It forces us to question what performance is.

LEO XU PROJECTS



Ignacio Acosta, *Mineral Collection*. Natural History Museum, London, UK, 2012, 50 x 63 cm. Courtesy: the artist

The Mineral Collection, The Natural History Museum, London

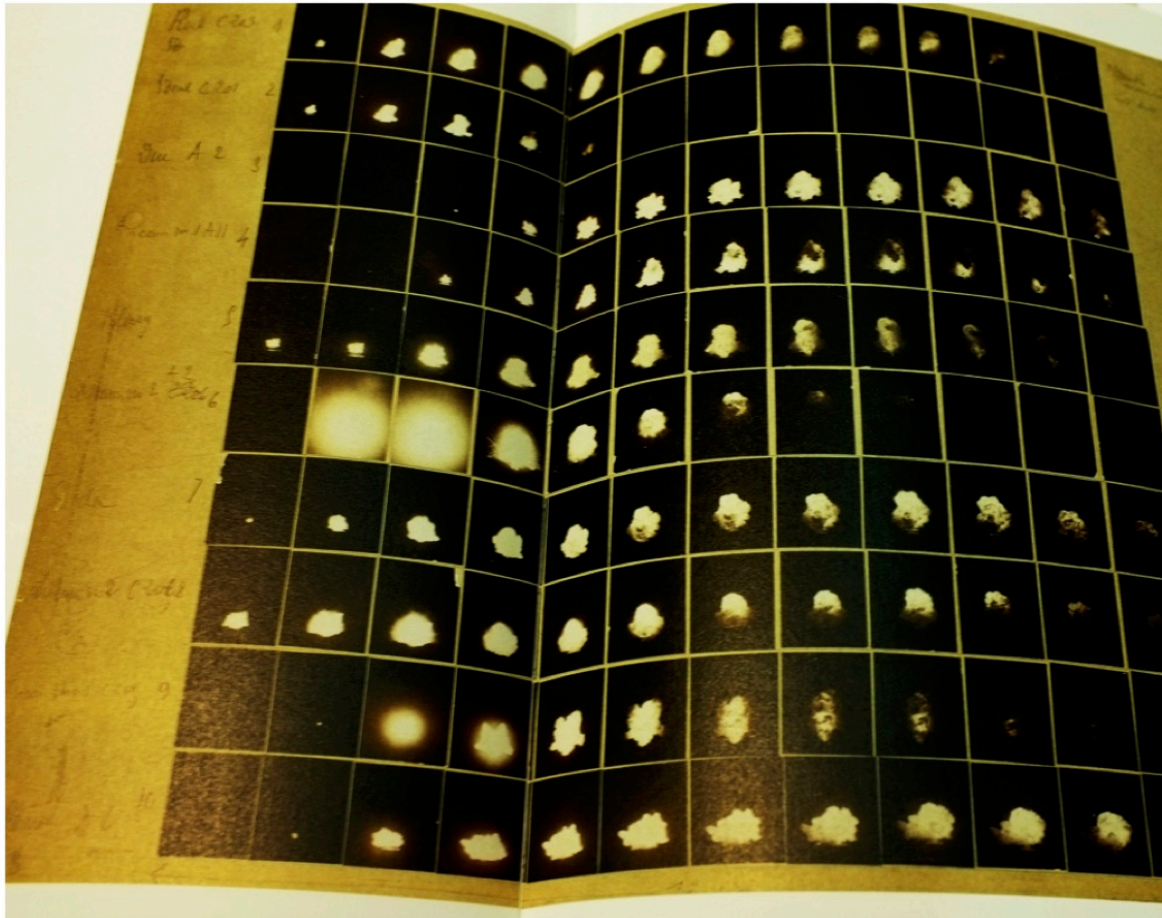
When I entered the gallery containing the mineral collection in the Natural History Museum in London last October I almost dropped to my knees. It's the earliest official collection of mineral samples in the world and fills this huge space. Here you can see the plenitude of pure natural form. Its different way of growing, delicate and colourful. Humans treat themselves as the measure of all things, and using visual methods to distinguish, by seeing differences and similarity.



Courtesy: the artist

Old Printed Matter

I like all kinds of printing but especially old books and their material. I love that old books were handmade and that people would put a lot more physical energy into the production and design. The format of the printed word has long been settled, but these three dimensional diagrams are ingenious. It looks like an exhibition on paper.



Courtesy: the artist

Scientific images showing how different minerals burn

Natural scientific images usually have a particular visual structure: they look like a slice from the physical world, isolating a phenomenon for study. Without context, these functional images seem closed to further explanation – purely formal presentation.

GUO HONGWEI

Guo Hongwei (b.1982) is an artist who lives in Beijing, China. Recent solo exhibitions include 'Lustrous and Dazzling', Gallery 100, Taipei (2015) 'Interface', A307, Beijing, (2015), 'The Great Metaphorist', Chambers Fine Art, Beijing (2014), 'Miss Oyu', Frieze New York, New York (2014) and 'Editing', Leo Xu Projects, Shanghai (2013). As well as his own practice he runs and curates the project space 'The Gland' in the Black Bridge area of Beijing. The group show he curated, 'The Rural Poetics', was shown at Leo Xu Projects's booth at Frieze London, 2015.