

# JIN SHAN: “MY DAD IS LI GANG!”

David Winton Bell Gallery  
List Art Center  
Brown University  
64 College Street  
Providence, Rhode Island

September 1 through November 4

Bell Gallery curator Ian Alden Russell sees Jin Shan as a “jester” — someone who shocks his audiences by creating off-balance visual statements that shed light on social questions. The title of Jin’s show is slang, a slogan used in China about or by those wanting to avoid responsibility. It basically means; “I dare you to hold me accountable!” — spoken by people believing they are so connected socially, economically or politically that they are impervious.

Jin Shan’s style is that of serial pun artist. For this installation, he has used copious amounts of glue to adhere responsibility in a man-made environment of ooze and/or culpability. Jin has created three-dimensional parts mired in or slathered with glue, notably a three-wheel cycle of the type used by Chinese laborers that seemingly propels a replica of the Tiangong 1 space station. The mirrored skin of the spacecraft is a prism reflecting yellow light splitting visual information playfully for audiences to interpret from different angles.

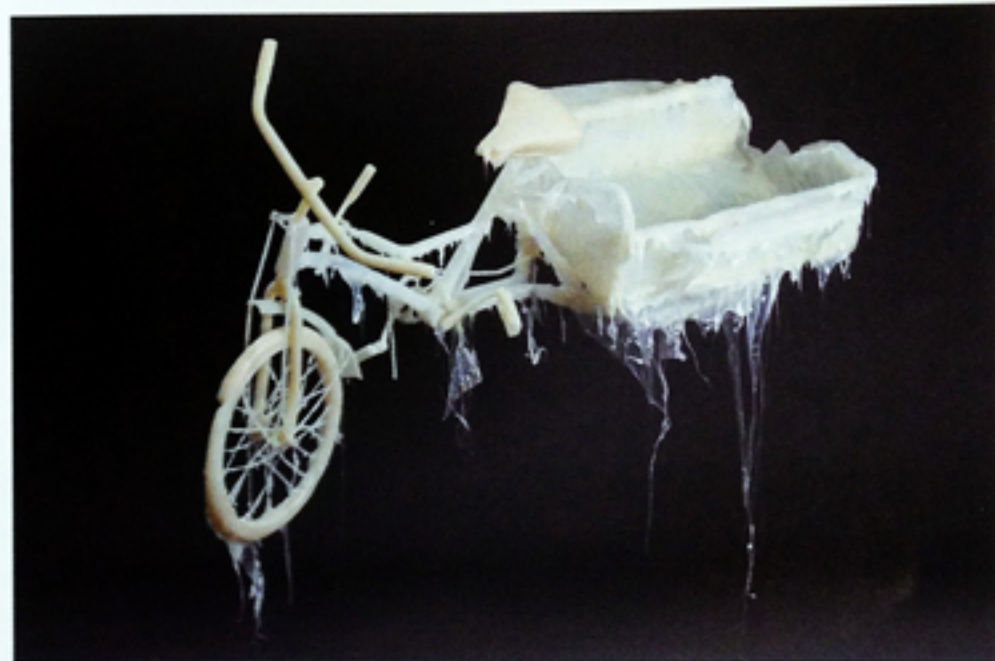
The David Winton Bell Gallery is a modernist cube, which Jin Shan makes intimate for his storytelling by building an inner cube of temporary walls, framing the narrative. The newly constructed plaster walls are imbedded with handprints

suggesting the effort of many people against the actions of a few. Jin Shan’s use of yellow incandescent light is an informing element in this installation (gold is lucky in China), unifying his semiotic tableaux. As a whole he blends imagery from past and present to jumpstart a discourse about havoc and greater good that is relevant globally.

“My dad is Li Gang!” is Russell’s first major statement show, and so with this collaboration he is asserting his curatorial mark. Correspondingly, Jin Shan has had limited exposure in the United States and this opportunity allows him to utilize resources at Brown’s media center to make this major project. Jin’s first solo gallery show will run concurrently at Masters & Pelavin in New York.

Russell and Jin are of similar ages and met last year in Shanghai when Russell was scoping out China’s art scene. Russell was taken with Jin’s work and, “...his personality and his attitude ... and knew (he’d) love to have the opportunity to work with (Jin) on a project in the future.” From a curatorial standpoint, Russell said that it has been enjoyable to engage in an exchange of ideas with Jin Shan, easier to some degree because the artist speaks English. Among interesting hurdles: the difference inherent between east and west in

“MY DAD IS LI GANG!” IS AN INSTALLATION BY SHANGHAI-BASED ARTIST JIN SHAN CREATED ON-SITE FOR BROWN UNIVERSITY’S DAVID WINTON BELL GALLERY. IT IS A MULTI-MEDIA ENVIRONMENT STAGED TO CONFRONT ATTITUDES AND SOCIAL CURRENTS IN CHINA TODAY. JIN HAS COMIC TIMING: ABRUPT WITH ABSURDITY AIMED AT SUGGESTING CONSEQUENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY.



*My dad is Li Gang!* (detail), 2012, mixed-media, dimensions variable (photograph by Zhong Han).

terms of where the punch line hits.

Jin Shan rides the second wave of contemporary Chinese talent that wants to engage the West. The first wave is noted for its epic spectacle, whereas Shan’s ethos is interventionist street art. With his art, audiences are confronted by impropriety, uncomfortable truth or paradox. A response to his crude and rude instantaneous peculiarity might be a burst of laughter, which happens when suppressed things are revealed.

This installation is an opportunity for Jin Shan as an artist to create an elaborate joke. As a space, Bell Gallery has a sense of physical gravity, which allows the artist to

experiment with the idea of audience immersion.

Jin Shan teaches at the University of Shanghai for Science and Technology and seems comfortable having his creative constructs involve technology, both directly and indirectly. Previous projects he’s done have had raw candor and a rapid YouTube style of information dissemination that in many ways defines contemporary culture. The controversy Jin Shan cultivates feeds into an important premise in fine art — change.

| Suzanne Volmer