

Ezra Nahmad
CHINESEDREAM



Show: May 23 – July 26, 2014

Wednesday to Saturday, 2-7pm and by appointment

Opening on Tuesday, May 22, 6-9pm

"Officials and scholars from around the world offered diverse views of how the Chinese Dream concept championed by President Xi Jinping will benefit the country and the world at the International Dialogue on the Chinese Dream seminar in Shanghai on Saturday. »
(China Daily, December 8th, 2013).

Chinesedream juxtaposes two utopias: the Chinese Dream, an ideology recently created by the Chinese Communist party and modeled after both the American dream and the Maoist dream. Pictures produced in China in 2013 are arranged with documentary images dating back to the Maoist era, approximately between the 1950's and 1970's. Juxtaposing these two sorts of images, both in a synchronic and anachronic manner, brings about a contradictory perception, an overlapping of times, of periods and vantage points. In *Chinesedream*, there is an association of images that could be a collage but isn't. Rather the effect comes from *virtual archiving* of facts and of time exposed in a pattern of reciprocal intrusions, and by so doing provoke a desire for history. *Chinesedream* is also the extension of a series of paintings in the 1990's by Ezra Nahmad. Some of these canvasses are on exhibit.

Contact :

Françoise Morin

Tel : 01 78 94 03 00

Email : contact@lesdoucheslagalerie.com

CHINESEDREAM

“Nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history”

Walter Benjamin

In *Chinesedream*, there is an association of images that could be a collage but isn't. Rather the effect comes from *virtual archiving*. This concept puts photography into a digital environment. Within it are assembled masses of documents along with the right to scrutinize them via tubes, the overall monitoring, all of which change the nature of photography. The image of a tube is used to describe the digital flow that depicts the fluid, yet agitated, style of existence, of shadowy journeys, of recurring, uninterrupted signs. The tracking and the shadowing of information in digital space reinforce suspicions about photographs and transforms their silver print moment into a primitive stage of innocence.

Such phenomena, *power of the masses, wealth, accelerated dissemination, “peep hole” scrutiny and surveillance* calls to mind the huge population, the historic acceleration, and general surveillance that prevail today in China. There is a concomitance even a complicity between the digital revolution and China's shift to a new capitalism. And it is undoubtedly, in respect to time, to the past, and to history that this coincidence is the most telling. There is no ignorance of nor scorn towards the past but rather an unfolding of a new embryonic historic awareness, a sort of realization of Walter Benjamin's wish: *“Nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history.”*

Digital stocking, in its promise to account for everything that happens, bets on this wish. As far as the Chinese are concerned everything that has come and is to come must be seen in the light of the long period of Maoist amnesia. Because of this censorship they feel they must retrieve all that's been lost.

China led a revolutionary, modern fight in order to reach its independence in the 20th century. It threw off its feudal yoke and got rid of foreign domination; China experienced violent political strife, almost like civil wars, after its declaration of independence. China moved into the modern world by making a tabula rasa of its past, by placing industrial and economic progress above everything. But these myths of modernity and of revolution didn't fade from the Chinese horizon with the end of Maoism. They still guide China's future and that of most nations.

China acquired its independence in October 1949, and a year earlier Israel also became a full fledged state, and though the history of each of these two countries is very different, the conflicts that precede and follow their road to independence are based on identical illusions and dreams of national regeneration, blind faith in technological and industrial progress, scorn for the eradicated old world. The Chinese masses liberated themselves, but their vitality was again quickly pillaged. There is a continuity in Maoist utopia and the *Chinese dream* of XI Jinping rooted in growth, and the Chinese refuse to evaluate Maoism and to consider its

failure. Instead, they both pursue the same objectives but by different means. *Chinesedream* evokes these historic turnabouts by the urban views, by the lost or wild-eyed looks, by the processions and the cohorts of rural peasants recruited and put into communes, by the red guards, or by the anonymous masses shipped off to the high rises in the Chinese metropolitan areas.

Chinesedream is an improbable rapprochement between rockeries found in traditional Chinese gardens and highrise apartment buildings that line the highways in the middle of nowhere. Could this daring hypothesis about the Chinese imagination explain the new towers as rockeries symbolizing telluric forces in the universe?

The art of Chinese gardening creates an ideal cosmos in miniature; it's a space designed for greenery, water, paths, and rocks; it mirrors the universe. The rockery evokes the mountains, living skeletons of the earth--an emanation of bony parts of the universe that secure its stability and permanence; all of this sustained by the breath. Undoubtedly, this all goes back to a geomantic tradition or the art of divination by casting earth or stones. The care of the rockery, its arrangement, its lighting and decoration summons an exchange between the finite stone placed on its base with its minute surface details and the mountains, meteorites, or planets.

In the shifting of the scale from the smallest to biggest, from close to afar, the individual comes into contact with cosmic energies. The more that a stone posed vertically in the garden approaches human scale, the more obvious the union between man and nature becomes. If the towers of Shanghai symbolize the force and vitality of Chinese capitalism, the dynamism of such urban growth, the magnetism is comparable to that of rockeries in traditional gardens.

The minerality and the concentration of the towers remind us of mountain ranges, their peaks as high as the spires of gothic churches. They evoke a rising to the sky, a liberation from earthly constraints and gravity. The movements that animate them, geometric mosaics of the facades, circulations of body fluids, scintillating evening lights resemble breaths that cross over the rockeries, symbolizing cosmic forces.

The hypothesis of a permutation of these two objects in the Chinese imaginary is nourished by such similarities. In the same way, rockeries and towers also evoke the idea of construction; they remind us of primitive, telluric sculpture. And this primitivism is well suited to myth and dreams, with the vertigo produced from the scale, the unfolding from the smallest to the biggest which produces a singular headiness.

The binary compositions of *Chinesedream*, left/right, black and white/color, in front of/ in back of, do not aim solely at engaging a temporal pulse. They set up a spatial scale as well by joining close-ups of faces and urban panoramas in a clear visual discrepancy. This juxtaposition produces a tension between the sensory, visual facts on the one hand, and the social, environmental events on the other--between emotions and acts, of people or groups, of trivial events and historical ones.

These tensions come to life in a conflict of scale where perception, reason, mastery, balance are questioned. *L'échelle* is first of all an object that moves in the world of geometry, of perspective, architectural design or music. The conjunction of the digital revolution e.g. the proliferation of *big data* – almost incomprehensible masses of voluminous information – from hyper-industrialization, from economic and political concentration – makes of the “scale” a social, economic, cultural or environmental object. The place of individuals in a society and in the universe is re-arranged (the “size” of the individual and that of the forces that envelop him/her) as was the case at the end of the Middle Ages or with the industrial revolution. The notion of “scale” is essential in digital photography (the range of the shooting angles from micro to macro--records of vast enlargement. *Chinesedream* composes with the experience of scale.

Ezra Nahmad

CHINESEDREAM

*Ezra Nahmad, Chinesedream, #6,
2013.*

Mixed Technique: inkjet print,
photocopy, mounted on canvas, acrylic.

160x130cm

Unique print.



*Ezra Nahmad, Chinesedream, #5,
2013.*

Mixed Technique: inkjet print,
photocopy, mounted on canvas, acrylic.

160x130cm

Unique print.



*Ezra Nahmad, Chinesedream, #8,
2013.*

Mixed Technique: inkjet print,
photocopy, mounted on canvas, acrylic

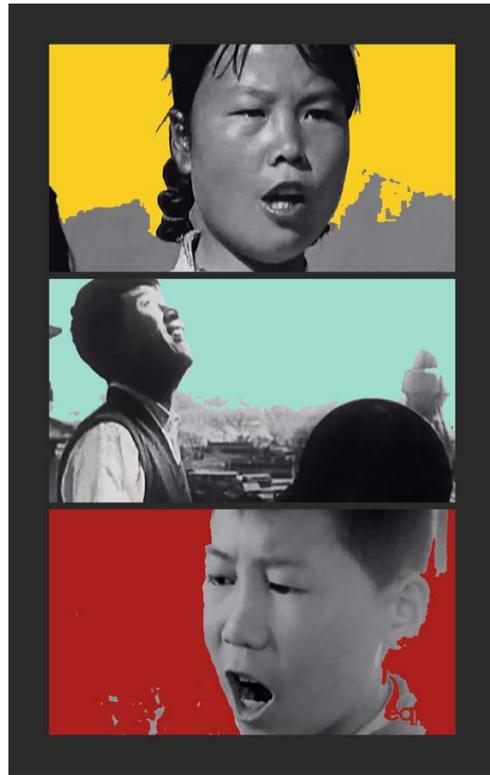
81x60cm

Unique print.



*Ezra Nahmad, Chinesedream, #21,
2013.*

Mixed Technique: inkjet print,
photocopy, mounted on canvas, acrylic.
130x81cm
Unique print.



*Ezra Nahmad, Chinesedream, #23,
2013.*

Pigment print on Dibond.
80x48cm
Edition of 3 + 1AP



© Ezra Nahmad/Courtesy Les Douches La Galerie

Sélection d'œuvres exposées

*Ezra Nahmad, Chinesedream, #9,
2013.*

Mixed Technique: inkjet print,
photocopy, mounted on canvas, acrylic.
81x60cm
Unique print.



*Ezra Nahmad, Chinesedream, #11,
2013.*

Mixed Technique: inkjet print,
photocopy, mounted on canvas, acrylic.
81x60cm
Unique print.



*Ezra Nahmad, Chinesedream, #12,
2013.*

Mixed Technique: inkjet print,
photocopy, mounted on canvas, acrylic.
81x60cm
Unique print.



*Ezra Nahmad, Chinesedream, #1,
2013.*

Mixed Technique: inkjet print,
photocopy, mounted on canvas, acrylic.
81x60cm
Unique print.



*Ezra Nahmad, Chinesedream, #14,
2013.*

Mixed Technique: inkjet print,
photocopy, mounted on canvas, acrylic.
81x60cm
Unique print.



*Ezra Nahmad, Série Chinesedream,
#17, 2013.*

Mixed Technique: inkjet print,
photocopy, mounted on canvas, acrylic.
81x60cm
Unique print.



*Ezra Nahmad, Chinesedream, #20,
2013.*

Pigment print on Dibond.
80x61cm
Edition of 3 + 1AP



© Ezra Nahmad/Courtesy Les Douches La Galerie

Ezra Nahmad

My parents are Egyptian; my family is originally from Aleppo, Istanbul, Morocco, and Italy. As for myself, I was born in Israel and grew up there until I was ten. I had a happy childhood. When I was little, I was accustomed to hearing three languages at home. The sea was my daily horizon for a long time and then at ten I left for Paris by boat with my family.

I went to a lycée in Paris in the 19th district. I lived in a sixth floor walk up in Ménilmontant. When I'd do my homework, I'd look out and see all of Paris from my sixth floor vantage point.

Later on, as an adolescent, I was absolutely crazy about the movies. I spent a lot of time in movie theaters; I used to draw and do collages. All of this, of course, was after my baccalaureate.

I went back to Israel because my parents no longer wanted to stay in Paris. I lived there for another 5 years and enrolled at the university without much enthusiasm. I became a political activist. But I didn't feel comfortable and decided to return to Europe. I intended to go to Paris, but I stopped in Italy, in Florence, for ten years. There I studied Art History and began to paint and exhibit my work.

After my Masters degree (my thesis advisor was an art historian and poet), I began my work as an editor, translator and author of monographs published for major Italian museums.

I still like languages. After this long stay in Italy, I went back to Paris to continue painting and working in journalism as a critic. I have regularly participated in or set up educational projects; I like sharing my experience with amateurs in all kinds of fields.

As of now, I'm photographing and still writing on photography as a critic (I use a pseudonym). I live in Paris and the Loire valley, near Angers.