

October 2016

ArtReview Asia

"Chou Yu-Cheng *Chemical Gilding, Keep Calm, Galvanise, Pray, Gradient, Ashes, Manifestation, Unequal, Dissatisfaction, Capitalise, Incense Burner, Survival, Agitation, Hit, Day Light. II*"

Chou Yu-Cheng *Chemical Gilding, Keep Calm, Galvanise, Pray, Gradient, Ashes, Manifestation, Unequal, Dissatisfaction, Capitalise, Incense Burner, Survival, Agitation, Hit, Day Light. II*

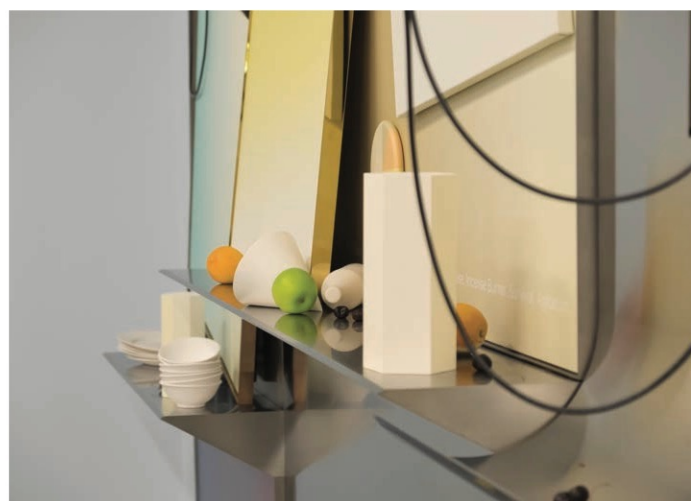
Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong 23 June – 13 August

Chou Yu-Cheng's solo, and all the works in it, including paintings on canvas and a set of installations hanging on the wall, are titled *Chemical Gilding, Keep Calm, Galvanise, Pray, Gradient, Ashes, Manifestation, Unequal, Dissatisfaction, Capitalise, Incense Burner, Survival, Agitation, Hit, Day Light. II*. A similar title (without the number II) was deployed for his solo exhibition at Berlin's Künstlerhaus Bethanien in 2015 and will be used for the third time (appended by the number III) in his upcoming show in Taipei. This reflects a major focus of Chou's practice: to develop continuous long-term projects and to frame the work under the concept of the project rather than in terms of the individual works themselves. At the same time, this weirdly longwinded title invites speculation as to what's on the artist's mind: can we take physical matter, personal moods and emotions, sociological and political perceptions, and human actions as materials for art? And can these 'materials', formed into an artwork, then be used to demonstrate and even correspond to issues in our social reality? Perhaps the show can be seen as the investigation into these questions, and the works in it as the answers the artist has come up with so far.

The first thing one sees upon entering the gallery is a set of digital-style acrylic paintings on canvas that depict different colours of the sky. What look like airbrush paintings are actually made by the artist's hand, each work consisting of around 30 layers of acrylic. On one of them the artist has painted the title of the piece and added a plaster sphere to the surface. A group of installations hang along one wall, each consisting of several individual pieces attached to a steel plate (a common construction material) that acts as its main body. One of these, recycled from the Berlin exhibition, is coated with a gold colour and dented as a result of stones having been thrown at it by visitors to the earlier show. The rest might almost be mixed-media works by Robert Rauschenberg, albeit in a more digital style, constructed out of components such as neon, paintings on canvas, plaster models of geometric shapes and bowls (still used today as teaching aids in painter training) and real fruit. Except for the fruit, which rots and is replaced over time, all the components are finely produced, with a gloss to their surface that is both digital and abstract. They are layered as if in Photoshop, overlapping or blending into each other,

thus creating a conceptual friction between digital-image production and formative fine-art creation.

In addition to experiments on the boundary between physical fine art and virtual digital images, Chou has created a semiotic system to build up his own vocabulary of meanings. For example, the artist uses geometric forms to represent fine art and its education, while stainless steel plates point to residential and commercial construction, which when coated in gold colour evoke capitalism, the subsequent denting by thrown stones referring to action and social and political criticism. With this meticulously constructed system, Chou attempts to turn a logic and methodology of artmaking into an experiment into the potential extensions of art's interpretation. The funny reversal here comes when one realises that what Chou's silent semiotic machine has actually produced is extraordinarily decorative artworks. It is like killing two birds with one stone: in the end, the artist not only completes his personal conceptual journey but also lives up to the most commonly held ideal of art in society at large. *Aimee Lin*



Chemical Gilding, Keep Calm..., 2016 (installation view).
Courtesy Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong