



## Mongolian Painter GAMA Tears Down the White Cube

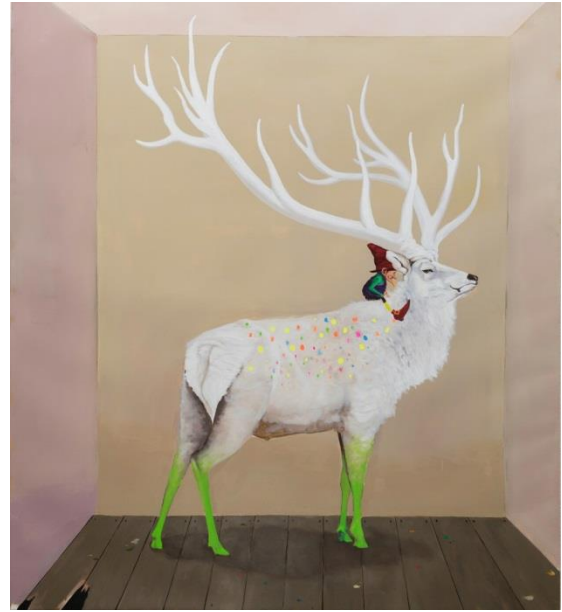
ARTSY EDITORIAL  
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**GAMA**

*The Holy Bible #1*, 2012-2014

Chambers Fine Art



**GAMA**

*A Deer of Nine Colors*, 2014

Chambers Fine Art

In 1976, *Artforum* published the first installment of Brian O’Doherty’s seminal series “Inside the White Cube,” a formal critique of the type of gallery that had become—and which remains—the default space for showing and viewing art. “A gallery is constructed along laws as rigorous as those for building a medieval church,” O’Doherty writes. “The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light.” The intended result is a neutral space,

devoid of context: “The art is free, as the saying used to go, ‘to take on its own life.’”



GAMA  
*Legend*, 2012  
Chambers Fine Art

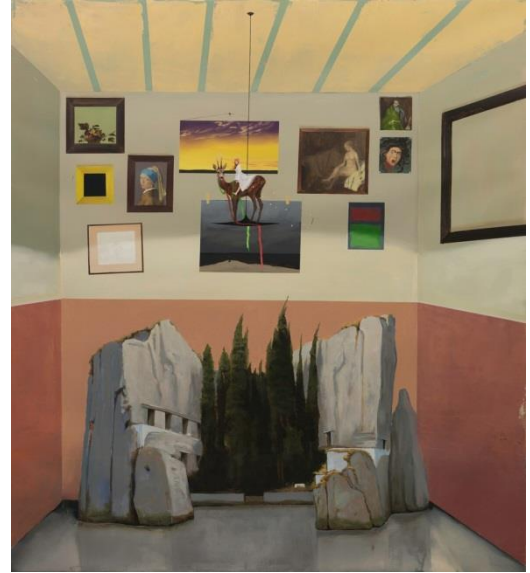


GAMA  
*Even Back Then, the Fox was the Hunter*, 2014  
Chambers Fine Art

GAMA—the Berlin-based Mongolian painter whose work will soon be shown by Chambers Fine Art at Art Basel in Hong Kong, as well as at the gallery’s space in Beijing—poses a multilayered challenge to this supposed neutrality. As a child growing up among nomads, he learned to approach context with reverence: GAMA’s family moved with every change of the seasons; climate and nature figured critically into his daily life. He ultimately studied oil painting at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in China. Taken with the European Old Masters and contemporary artists like Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke, he later relocated to Germany to begin his career. Nevertheless, his work reflects the rhythms of his early years—and, consequently, questions the ideology of Western art spaces.



**GAMA**  
*Baraker (Bath)*, 2010  
Chambers Fine Art



**GAMA**  
*Young Shepherd*, 2014  
Chambers Fine Art

For one thing, in contrast to the the ideal white cube that O’Doherty describes, GAMA always brings the outside in. In the painting *Baraker (Bath)* (2012), a three-dimensional hunk of mountain and river is depicted in the center of what appears to be a gallery, with exposed brick pillars and wooden beams hanging from the ceiling. In *Young Shepherd* (2014), he places sheets of rock and a swath of pine forest in front of a wall covered in iconic paintings like Vermeer’s *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (c. 1665) and Malevich’s *Black Square* (1915). Clearly, the setting is a room in an art institution, but the walls are half pink, the ceiling striped, and the barriers to the outdoors porous. In *Labsal (Alchemy)* (2009), the wall of the room itself becomes a multicolored abstract painting, while a massive tree puts down roots in the same wooden floor from which a colorful mushroom grows. GAMA grew up living in yurts—spaces without precise lines or right angles. Giving his scenes rounded edges in paintings like *Baumeister (Builder)* (2014), the artist reminds us that we take for granted not just the blankness of our galleries, but also the rectangularity of our rooms in general.



**GAMA**  
*Labsal (Alchemy)*, 2009  
Chambers Fine Art



**GAMA**  
*Baumeister (Builder)*, 2014  
Chambers Fine Art

GAMA's aunt was an important shaman, and her influence on him as a child pervades his work even now. "A shaman functions between two worlds (the physical world and the spirit world)," he says. "My paintings also incorporate two worlds (the interior and the exterior)." Exteriors are loaded with the contexts of time and place, and GAMA exposes his art to them, unafraid of their transformative power.

—Emily Rappaport

*"GAMA: Idylls of the Kings" is on view at Chambers Fine Art, Beijing, Mar. 7–May 3, 2015; visit Chambers Fine Art at Art Basel in Hong Kong 2015, Booth 3D20, March. 15–17.*